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ABSTRACT

This book provides a framework for developing community-based family support initiatives in public housing. After describing the historical and present contexts of this approach, the book details principles and key elements. Profiles are presented for eight organizations, all working in public housing, but with different strategies and emphases: (1) Project Uplift, Greensboro (North Carolina); (2) Family Learning Centers, Austin (Texas); (3) The Work Force Youth Unemployment Prevention Program, Cambridge (Massachusetts); (4) Project Match, Chicago (Illinois); (5) Commonwealth Tenants Association, Boston (Massachusetts); (6) The Welcome Project, Somerville (Massachusetts); (7) Rainier Vista Family Center, Seattle (Washington); and (8) Community Building in Partnership, Inc., Baltimore (Maryland). A common factor among these programs is that they are community-based and driven and that they strengthen communities. They emphasize prevention and early intervention, are of high quality, and both are coherent and easy to access. Some model program strategies are explored. Each program's effort is summarized in a descriptive chart. (SLD)

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Community-Based Family Support in Public Housing

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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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COMMUNITY-BASED FAMILY SUPPORT IN PUBLIC HOUSING

Researched and written by

Mary M. Lassen

Harvard Family Research Project
Cambridge, Massachusetts

THE HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

The Harvard Family Research Project was established in 1983 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education by Dr. Heather B. Weiss, who continues as its director. The project conducts and disseminates research about programs and policies to strengthen and support families with young children.

The project's mission is to examine and assist in the development of policies and programs to empower families and communities as contexts of human development.

Specializing in applied policy research, the project's outlook encompasses the view that to educate the whole child, parents, schools, and other community agencies must redefine their roles to include partnerships to support child development from infancy through adolescence. It maintains that to sustain gains, support initiatives must be continuous over a child's life.

The project is nationally recognized for providing much of the data demonstrating the value of preventive, comprehensive, collaborative, and family-focused services. It has a diverse research agenda, supported by public and private funders, that is designed to inform and shape national policy debates, advance evaluative practice, and encourage progressive program development.

The audience for the project's work ranges from national and state policy makers to researchers and local practitioners, many of whom have benefitted from the project's ability to provide new perspectives and suggest creative solutions.

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OVERVIEW OF FAMILY SUPPORT INITIATIVES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

PROJECT NAME/ LOCATION/ SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	COMMUNITY	YEAR BEGAN	ENTRY POINT	PROGRAM COMPONENTS	LINK TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
Project UPLIFT Greensboro, NC Statewide nonprofit organization	One 235-unit development, 100% African-American	1987	Child/ Family	Child care, family support, maternal and child health outreach, counseling, drop-in child care, referrals to local organizations, leadership training	Yes
Family Learning Centers Austin, TX Public housing authority	Seven developments, diverse population (Mexican-American, African-American, white)	1991	Child/ Family	Child care, afterschool programs, adult education, ESL, parenting classes, home-school linkages	Yes
Project MATCH Chicago, IL Research institute, also affiliated with and housed in health center	One very large development plus surrounding neighborhod, 100% African-American	1985	Adult	Employment counseling and follow-up, GED classes, brokered services for adults and children	No
Commonwealth Tenants Association Boston, MA Tenant group, incorporated as nonprofit organization	One 474-unit development, 38% African-American, 40% white, 14% Latino, 8% Asian	1969	Tenant/ Community	Programs for youth, preschool, senior activities, service linkages, physical revitalization	Yes

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PROJECT NAME/ LOCATION/ SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	COMMUNITY	YEAR BEGAN	ENTRY POINT	PROGRAM COMPONENTS	LINK TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
The Welcome Project Somerville, MA Incorporated now as a nonprofit organization, originally an effort of local provider group	One development, diverse population (white, Haitian, Latino, Asian, African-American)	1987	Tenant/ Community (especially refugee and immigrant women)	Women's groups, ESL classes, arts programming, teen groups, referrals to early childhood education, mental health, and other services	Yes
Rainier Vista Family Center Seattle, WA Settlement house	One 488-unit development, diverse population (Asian, East African, white, African-American)	1993	Tenant/ Community (especially refugee and immigrant women)	Leadership training, women's support groups, cultural events, and linkages to neighborhood resources	Yes
The Work Force Youth Unemployment Prevention Program Cambridge, MA Public housing authority	In three developments with diverse populations (African-American, white, Latino)	1989	Youth	Educational enrichment, employability skills training, tryout jobs, mentoring, counseling	No
Community Building in Partnerships, Inc. Baltimore, MD Public/private nonprofit corporation, sponsored by The Enterprise Foundation	Public housing development in predominantly African-American neighborhood of low to moderate incomes	1990	Broader community	Family support, education, health care, substance abuse, employment, youth and recreation services, physical and community development	Yes

INTRODUCTION

Over 3.4 million people in the United States live in public housing. Too frequently, the conditions are poor, and availability of services and resources is limited or non-existent. Public housing tenant leaders, overwhelmingly female, must wage a persistent struggle if they are to nurture their families and build stronger communities. Recently, public attention has been focused not only on preserving the nation's supply of affordable low-income housing but also on developing and providing services which will enable women and families to move from "dependence" to "interdependence."

Yet this public policy debate has focused on devising prescriptive and frequently punitive solutions for dealing with the complex and interrelated set of issues which confront low-income families. Not enough attention has been given to models of service delivery and community capacity-building which empower individuals and organizations to undertake and succeed in local problem solving.

For the children and families who reside in public housing developments, the linkages between service provision, education, community development, and housing have historically been weak. Nevertheless, promising examples of community-based family support initiatives are emerging in several medium- and large-sized cities across the country. Emphasizing support over bureaucratically-driven interventions, these pioneering organizations are creating a future for public housing residents that truly moves beyond the safety net.

This book provides a framework for developing community-based family support initiatives in public housing. After describing the context of this approach (both historical and present), the book details its principles and key elements. Profiles of eight organizations, all working in public housing communities but with varying strategies and emphases, are presented: Project UPLIFT (Greensboro, North Carolina); Family Learning Centers (Austin, Texas); The Work Force (Cambridge, Massachusetts); Project Match (Chicago, Illinois); Commonwealth Tenants Association (Boston, Massachusetts); The Welcome Project (Somerville, Massachusetts); Rainier Vista Family Center (Seattle, Washington); and Community Building in Partnership, Inc. (Baltimore, Maryland). The conclusion outlines the current challenges as well as policy implications for this emerging field.

THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE U.S.

The roots of the problems which residents face today lie in the history of public housing in the United States -- in the decisions and compromises that were made -- and in the profound demographic and economic changes that have taken place in our cities since the program's inception. From the start public housing has been divided into two categories: facilities for the elderly and the disabled; facilities for families. What began as transitional housing for working class families in the Depression and post-World War II years has become permanent housing for predominantly poor, female-headed families of color. The stories of residents and organizations struggling to make public housing work leave little doubt that, with the right kind of support from the outside and effective self-development and organizing within, public housing can succeed.

Knowledge about the political climate which surrounded the birth of public housing is key to understanding the ambivalence towards this effort which Americans have subsequently displayed. Public housing was born in response to a keenly felt need for low-income family housing but, most importantly, as a job creation scheme. The initial developments provided housing support to a "dislocated working class," primarily two-parent families who had suffered through the Depression.[1] Opposition from the outset led to compromises which resulted in many of the problems which have occurred in subsequent years. Initial opponents included the chambers of commerce, realtors, homebuilders, and savings and loan institutions, all of whom argued that housing was more appropriately a matter of private enterprise. Even President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had to be convinced by advocates, including his wife, that public housing offered a decent alternative to the private market.[2]

Many of today's most severely distressed public housing developments[3] exhibit deficiencies which originated in the program's initial stages. These include:

- Poor site selection.
- Excessive development scale or density.
- Poor site design.
- Inadequate building and unit design.

- Difficulties with the use of high-rise buildings for families with children.
- Use of inappropriate materials and inadequate construction standards.
- Lack of space for social services and resident activities.[4]

While some advocates, especially women working in the settlement house movement, argued forcefully for a link between public housing and community services, they did not prevail. To avoid competing with private housing, public housing's design and appearance had to be austere. Indeed, the Housing Act of 1937 stipulated that the projects it subsidized would "not be of elaborate or expensive design or materials..."[5]

A description of Chicago's Henry Horner Homes, by Alex Kotlowitz in *There Are No Children Here*, gives a sense of public housing living conditions in one city:

> "The buildings were constructed on the cheap. There were no lobbies to speak of, only the open breezeways. There was no communication system from the breezeways to the tenants. During the city's harsh winters elevator cables froze... .The trash chutes in each building were too narrow to handle the garbage of all its tenants. The boiler systems continually broke down... .And the medicine cabinet in each unit was not only easily removed, but it was connected to the medicine chest in the adjoining apartment. Over the years, residents had been robbed, assaulted and even murdered by people crawling through their medicine cabinet."[6]

Kotlowitz's description echoed a 1968 federal report describing Henry Horner and Chicago's other family public housing developments as "remindful of gigantic filing cabinets with separate cubicles for each human household."[7]

Another outcome of the fierce opposition to public housing was the decentralized nature of the housing program itself. This allowed local politicians to decide where public housing would be situated and who would gain admittance. Predictably, wealthier neighborhoods rejected developments, forcing most to be built in poorer, central city communities. Communities of color disproportionately became home to new public housing. Since

Ida B. Wells, a public housing development in Chicago, illustrates the density characteristic of some big city public housing developments. (photo by Gayle Epp)

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little additional land was available, slum clearance and displacement of existing residents frequently resulted. As the bulldozers cleared sites for new public housing, the neighborhood fabric was torn apart. In many communities it has never mended.

For example, a 1986 lawsuit, *Walker* v. *HUD*, alleged that the Dallas Housing Authority (DHA) constructed projects under an "explicit policy of racial segregation between 1937 and 1955."[8] Six developments were built for blacks, three for whites and two for Hispanics. All of the housing intended for blacks was constructed in neighborhoods with a majority black population. At the time that this desegregation lawsuit was initiated, the DHA developments "intended for black occupancy in black neighborhoods remain[ed] all black in occupancy."[9] Indeed, the court found that the West Dallas public housing site, which included separate black, white and Hispanic sections, "was planned, developed and occupied under an overt policy of racial segregation."[10] Public housing in Dallas, like that in many other cities, only served to reinforce existing local patterns of racial segregation.

Public housing developments frequently occupied a tenuous and unconnected position within the surrounding neighborhood.[11] Local governments did not see the need for close coordination between the public housing authority and other aspects of municipal service provision. While this seems key now, in general then only female settlement house activists anticipated the importance of a linked approach to services, housing and education.[12]

Public housing did, however, enjoy a brief period of relative political support and prosperity during the postwar expansion years. This was primarily because returning veterans and their families occupied a significant proportion of the units and left a few years later to purchase a home, often in the suburbs. A 1953 report of the Boston Housing Authority noted that only 4 percent of its tenants were entirely dependent on relief.[13] Indeed, the image, and reality, of two-parent, largely white families utilizing public housing as a way station provided political capital to the program into the early 1950s.

Many tenants recall the years immediately following World War II as a time of strong community bonds. Tenant organizations flourished in many developments, and informal activities such as barbecues, gardening and holiday parties were common. Mary

MacInnes of the Bunker Hill development in Charlestown (Boston), Massachusetts, recalls a "strong stay-together community."[14] La Joe Rivers, the mother of the boys profiled in *There Are No Children Here*, remembers a wide array of activities for children at Henry Horner in the 1950s: Girl Scouts, Boys Club, drum and bugle corps, baseball teams, and swimming.[15] In memory, the post World War II years remain a period when many residents felt that they could rely on a network of friends and extended family to provide material and social support. While it is important not to romanticize the difficulties of raising a family in public housing during its early period, it is noteworthy that many public housing communities did provide a strong support system.

The 1949 Housing Act, however, marked a clear change of direction: public housing authorities pursued a goal of evicting all over-income tenants. Mirroring changes in large urban areas, the public housing population gradually became increasingly unemployed or underemployed; recipients of public assistance; female-headed, single-parent families; the very old or very young; and members of racial minority groups. According to one study, the annual incomes of public housing residents averaged 57 percent of the national median in 1950; but by 1977, that figure dropped to 27 percent.[16]

As family incomes decreased, operating expenses rose. Housing authorities were forced to absorb rising energy costs, and as maintenance costs grew for older buildings, housing authorities began to raise rents. Tenants, many of whom were on fixed budgets, reacted via demonstrations and rent strikes. In response to these protests, Congress passed the Brooke Amendments in 1969, which set maximum rent payments at 25 percent of a tenant's income. To offset the reduced income at the local level, Congress eventually agreed to provide an annual operating subsidy to housing authorities. In 1981, the maximum rent payment was adjusted upward to 30 percent of a family's income.[17]

By the early 1960s, public housing in many places suffered from a combination of mismanagement and institutional neglect. Some of the older developments had begun to experience serious maintenance problems. Whole buildings fell into disrepair and in many cities vacant units were not filled because funding was unavailable for repairs. In turn, this meant less revenue for the housing authority to use for maintenance. One housing expert would later write:

> "Public housing was allowed to wallow in its own physical decline without management subsidies sufficient to deal with festering social problems or capital subsidies sufficient to maintain livable conditions."[18]

The pattern of government abandonment of public housing continued during the 1960s and early 1970s. Services such as police protection, garbage collection, health care, adult education, and youth programs were not easily available to most public housing residents.[19] Lack of these and other services heightened the level of isolation between the developments and their surrounding communities.

Indeed, when Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, the institution of public housing was under attack. A decentralized system with little built-in accountability, lack of aggressive enforcement by HUD, weak tenant involvement, severe budget constraints, and a conservative political climate presented serious obstacles to assuring safe and effective public housing. Yet, despite these massive problems, waiting lists ballooned in many cities as the supply of affordable housing was badly outstripped by the growing demand.[20]

Throughout the 1980s, the major urban areas in which most public housing was situated were under siege. According to urban sociologist William Julius Wilson, the urban economy's loss of many jobs in the basic manufacturing sector--at the same time as the growth of suburban-based, high technology jobs--resulted in less well-paid employment for inner-city residents.[21] After the mid-1980s, average household income declined in the great majority of housing authorities,[22] and by 1991, 85 percent of families with dependent children living in public housing were headed by women. In some cities this figure reached 95 percent.[23] At the same time, about 75 percent of families living in public housing reported receiving no income from employment.[24] Reflecting the urgency of this economic reality, new HUD eligibility guidelines gave priority to the poorest applicants or to those in emergency situations (such as the homeless).

Ironically these guidelines had two contradictory results: in some developments, tenants illegally doubled up, while in other locales, vacancy rates soared to over 40 percent.[25] As the public-housing population profile changed to reflect both demographic changes and new HUD regulations, federal and local policies

regarding social service provision became increasingly critical to the well-being of many poor families. Public sentiment, however, did not support those key policies. Indeed, after an upsurge of spending for social service programs during the Great Society, the 1970s and 1980s were marked by a hostility towards poor people.[26] Simply put, federal and local policies during this era did not, for the most part, increase access to social services, despite the surging number of poor families.

During the Bush Administration, public housing received increased attention from HUD Secretary Jack Kemp. Kemp's determined emphasis on resident management and ownership, while implemented in only a small fraction of settings, focused a stronger spotlight on the conditions in public housing. Other approaches, however, to improving those conditions--such as fostering connections to the wider community or increasing federal and state resources--received considerably less attention.

The Clinton Administration inherited a troubled system under pressure from many quarters. Threats of demolishing up to 50,000 units[27] nationwide have provoked political battles which raise complex issues: the growing need for affordable housing; persistent racial segregation in the areas of housing, education and employment; severe environmental risks; and far-reaching economic changes. The threats are not idle. A number of units have already been destroyed.

Many of the current policy debates are framed by these dynamics. Key issues, frequently linked to each other, include:

- The permanent versus transitional nature of public housing.
- The role of income mixing.
- Spatial concentration of low-income people from urban neighborhoods to less densely populated suburban communities.
- The role of resident management or ownership in rebuilding public housing communities.
- The integration of housing and family support services.

As these issues are debated, it is critical that public housing resident groups and their allies interject their experiences and successes into the broader discussion.

This photograph of the Desire public housing development in New Orleans illustrates the physical decline typical of some public housing. (photo by Gayle Epp)

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THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Public housing has become a largely woman's community. Yet, from the outset, the design as well as the locations selected for public housing developments have adversely affected the lives of women and their families. The enormous stresses that already plague low-income, female-headed families are magnified by family-unfriendly designs and site location. Design limitations restrict many mothers' ability to keep an eye on their children as they play outside. Locating families on the upper stories of high-rise apartments with elevators in constant disrepair further burdens mothers with young children. Reports of children falling down elevator shafts or from high windows are not infrequent.[28] Health and safety problems, such as lead-based paint or asbestos, are also common. The layout of many apartments with small rooms and insufficient closet space also proves inadequate to the needs of families, as does the lack of on-site laundry facilities.[29] Finally, the lack of indoor community space for holding meetings or organizing programs for children and youth reflects the designers' original view that public housing is transitional.

The issues of safety and violence have altered the social landscape in many of the larger city and, increasingly, small- and medium-sized city neighborhoods where public housing is based. Recent studies cite security as the top concern of public housing residents.[30] Violence affects all activity, from individual to collective, in a pervasive fashion. As in other communities, domestic violence is common. Parents, fearful of violence, often do not allow children to play outside. Young people join gangs as a form of self-protection. Adults themselves are frequently unwilling to venture out to a meeting in another part of the development.[31]

Poorly laid out buildings and inadequate exterior secured space have created unprotected areas that endanger women's and children's security.[32] The distance of many public housing developments from services and stores has proved problematic, particularly since transportation is not easily accessible. For example, residents of the Franklin Hill and Franklin Field developments in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and of the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago report that taxicabs are often unwilling to enter their neighborhoods.[33]

This photo of the Commonwealth development before renovations shows how deplorable public housing conditions can be.
(photo by Gayle Epp)

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Public housing policies and regulations create yet another obstacle to ensuring safety and the ability of communities and individuals to reach their full potential. Public housing tenant selection policies which aim to meet racial quotas, for example, sometimes have the perverse result of separating extended families from one another by locating a family in one development and its relatives in another. Maintaining close connections with extended family members, frequently a strong source of support for parents with young children, is thus discouraged by these policies. Low-income women who live in public housing are also subject to codes governing their behavior in ways that beneficiaries of other programs (for example, unemployment compensation or farm subsidies) are not.[34] Regulations which establish who can be listed on the apartment's lease, for example, often encourage surreptitious arrivals and departures of adult men. These limitations on personal relationships present special challenges to those attempting to strengthen families and to build community.

Still, it is overwhelmingly the *women* who live in public housing who provide leadership in fighting for improvements at the local level. Indeed, there has been a considerable amount written in the past two decades about the role of female leaders in locality-based organizations.[35] Rayna Rapp describes how the community *is* the place of work for many low-income women:

> "Among the poor, families do not exhibit the radical split between 'private, at home' and 'public, at work' found in families of the stable working class. Neither work relations nor household relations are as continuous or distinct."[36]

Since many women tend to see their community as an extension of their family, it may be a mediating body which offers possibilities for activity between private life and large scale institutions.

Many women with grassroots organizational experience possess attributes which make them effective as leaders, including skills in mediation, conflict resolution, and trust-building. They often run meetings by encouraging participation.[37] In recent years, feminist theorists have focused on women's moral vision, emphasizing the importance of connection to and responsibility for others.[38] The leadership evinced in these programs suggests that there is a link between the strengths of individual caring and connection which many women demonstrate and the ability of

women to work collectively to improve their social and economic conditions. However, due to situations which promote individualistic solutions as well as internalized oppression, women who live in public housing do not always demonstrate this kind of concern. Still, this same "female" tradition of caring which extends from the family to the broader community is reflected in the linkages between family and community empowerment.

Although most authorities house a predominantly minority population, the racial and ethnic composition of public housing varies widely from city to city. According to 1991 HUD data, the total public housing population is 16 percent white, 62 percent African-American, and 20 percent Hispanic, with the remaining 2 percent primarily Asian.[39] In many cities there are increasing numbers of immigrants applying for, and slowly making their way off, waiting lists into available units. The growing racial, ethnic and language diversity among tenants presents additional challenges for these communities.

REACHING BEYOND THE SAFETY NET

To encourage community empowerment, we must move from a "safety net" approach that addresses symptoms and fosters dependence to a self-sufficiency approach that addresses root causes and strengthens families and communities. Reaching beyond the safety net can only come from organizing efforts within the community itself. Communities must identify key problems and resources, develop strategies for addressing them, and mobilize their members in a self-development effort. Lasting change does not come by doing things to or for communities, but by helping communities do things for themselves. This vision of a just system of social provision is rooted in a belief in the value of what James Coleman calls "social capital," described by Robert Putman as those "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."[40]

There is considerable evidence that the problems facing poor families -- poverty, unemployment, inadequate health care, education, housing and parenting support -- are interrelated. Yet, notes Marion Pines, an expert in the development of integrated service delivery systems:

> "The disparate systems implementing service programs to offset the particular deficit seem often to exacerbate the problems by dealing with each 'symptom' as an unrelated part of the whole; by dealing with the individuals as an unrelated part of the family unit."[41]

Worse, systems often deal with the family as an unrelated part of the community. A more holistic approach to improving public housing addresses how problems interrelate, and how families comprise communities.

Still, barriers to this approach are many. They include the prevailing fragmentation and depersonalization of services, separate funding streams, conflicting regulations, and incompatible disciplinary approaches.[42] In addition, players within bureaucracies often fight to protect their turf, and the problems themselves are admittedly complex.[43] Finally, service providers often act on the assumption that the professionals have the expertise and the client has the problem. According to one activist, this is an attitude of "you can't do but we can do."[44] It becomes, as John McKnight writes, "a world of dependence."[45]

What are the critical components of a more promising vision? A strategy which links the economic, social, educational, housing and community domains seems likely to have the greatest impact. At the core of this approach are parents -- the critical elements in rearing healthy, confident and caring children. Yet, parents cannot adequately perform this job unless they are supported by a caring and strong community.[46] It is critical to understand that this broadened definition of comprehensiveness goes beyond previous calls for service coordination; the community-building linkage is essential. Such a broad vision involves a set of high-quality initiatives which enhance the capacities of both the individual family *and* the larger community to deal with a range of needs.

There are several common characteristics of the efforts that grow from this kind of family-centered community empowerment approach:

> ***They are community-based and community-driven.*** Services are geographically and culturally rooted in the community served. At the same time, organizations promote an appreciation for diversity.

They strengthen families and communities. Successful programs support individuals in the context of families and families in the context of communities. They seek to build upon assets which will vary but be present in every family and community setting. Father Gerry Pantin of SERVOL, a unique family and youth empowerment organization in Trinidad, says, "They must engage in respectful listening."[47]

They are comprehensive. They offer a range of services to families who have previously experienced a fragmented approach to their concerns. As the Council for Economic Development argues, we need to "view early childhood, education, social services, job training and economic development as parts of an interdependent system of human investment rather than as independent enterprises."[48]

They emphasize prevention and early intervention. Early help is the best help; the longer problems persist the more difficult and costly it is to solve them.

They are high quality. Isolated and fragmented help, low-intensity services, and services of poor quality are of little use to families. Evidence points to the value of those programs which are "additive," where multiple supports build upon one another and operate in a coordinated way. Furthermore, it is essential that low income families start to receive the *best* quality programs the society is capable of providing; in all too many situations, programs become just one more regimented experience lacking in educational enrichment.[49]

They are coherent and easy to access. Programs meet people where they are and conduct aggressive outreach, because families who need help the most are often least likely to seek it.[50]

They have staff who have the time, skills and support to build relationships of trust with the families and communities they serve. Frequently, community members are employed as family workers so that a peer-to-peer relationship is easier to achieve.

Such a family-centered community empowerment approach provides the framework for more reciprocal relationships than those possible in a powerful professional-dependent client model. This approach encourages an ethic of mutual obligation between family members, community members, consumers of services and service providers.

Public housing offers an ideal setting for this type of initiative for a variety of reasons: residents share a common address, many similar problems, and eligibility for many of the same programs and funding streams. Moreover, they share the same visible landlord, although housing conditions may vary widely from one site to the next. This opens the possibility for tenants to take collective action.

While family-centered community empowerment initiatives vary from community to community, it is possible to envision their general outlines. As a starting point, the parents' basic survival needs (adequate food, housing, clothing, childcare, health care and income) must be addressed. Without attention to these areas, family support programs are unlikely to retain, never mind affect, low-income parents.[31]

Other components for any family-focused strategy must include home visiting,[32] peer support, parent education, respite childcare, violence prevention (both domestic and community-wide), employment training and counseling, literacy and English-as-a Second Language (ESL) classes, as well as afterschool and teen programs.

Jobs

The key to moving beyond the safety net is employment -- good jobs that can support a family -- and the educational, job training, job placement, child care and other supports needed for families to move from dependence to self-sufficiency. The best programs not only provide access to training programs but also understand that finding and keeping a job requires coordination of many other resources.

Access

Core programs must be located in or very near the public housing development site. Poor women and children live their lives more closely to home; thus, community-centered programs will have a

greater chance of involving them.[53] From this base, linkages with other programs in the broader community become achievable. The question of which type of organization -- mainline human service agency, tenant organization, housing authority or community-based organization -- is best suited to take the lead role in overseeing service delivery in public housing settings may vary. Under any set of arrangements, it is important for residents to participate in the planning and management of social and support services. Consistent outreach efforts -- even with those hesitant to participate -- work to connect tenants with the programs.

Leadership

The ability of resident organizations to engage in developing and monitoring a comprehensive strategy for their community varies widely. Organizations which are experienced in door-to-door outreach, house meetings, direct action organizing, negotiations and inclusion are positioned well to participate in such an undertaking. Access to sensitive and informed technical assistance and leadership training makes an enormous difference to groups which must stake out equal footing on the terrain claimed by supposedly expert professionals.[54]

Community Empowerment

By building on the assets and knowledge of residents and their allies, a system which emphasizes support over bureaucratically-driven interventions is possible. The real solutions to tenants' problems lie in their own individual and collective actions, buttressed by other organizations. By harnessing the frequently unacknowledged resources of public housing residents, and understanding the link between the fate of individuals and the groups to which they belong, we can begin to envision public housing developments which are truly model neighborhoods.

MODELS FOR THE FUTURE

Glimpses of the possibilities such an integrated approach holds are evident today in a number of public housing communities. Many exhibit some, but not all, of the key elements outlined above. With federal funding for significant renovation and service integration recently available, the creation of high-quality

initiatives appears within reach in many cities.[55] In a survey conducted with support from the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities, many cities indicated recent movement towards the creation of family support initiatives. However, only some are linked to community organizing and development strategies.[56]

The tenant organizations, housing authorities and community-based organizations which have piloted innovative efforts have done much to inform the current discussion. Still fragmented from each other, these organizations must contend with the challenges of institutionalization and changing political trends. Overall support for public housing remains tenuous. Policy decisions about funding levels, the institution of a voucher system, and welfare reform will all affect the ability of public housing developments to establish family support programs. Most programs are funded on short-term monies. Many are still working out relationships with collaborative partners. Some are struggling with issues of staff training and retention, as more formal training programs are not yet producing sufficient staff with the background for these new models. Some tenant organizations have been weakened by years of resistance to cuts in basic service and housing provision. Many of these groups exist in the context of larger neighborhoods which experience similar problems on a broader scale. In short, the potential for these new approaches appears strong, while the challenges remain formidable.

MODEL PROGRAM STRATEGIES

While there is no one approach which can be called "the family-centered community empowerment strategy," family support programs in public housing can be categorized by their main point of departure. This does not imply that they limit their activities to this focus, but it does describe their starting points. The initiatives highlighted here are grouped loosely as: young child/parenting strategies; youth strategies; adult strategies; public housing tenant/community strategies; and broader neighborhood strategies.

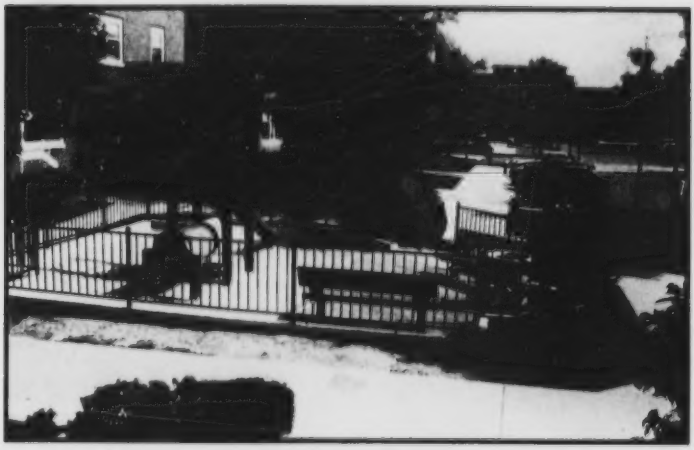
Young child/parenting strategies focus on the young child within the family setting and the role of the parent as the child's first teacher. Many proponents of this approach believe

that the motivation to build a better life for the child is an extremely powerful incentive for a parent. Two organizations profiled in the following pages exemplify this approach: Project UPLIFT in Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Family Learning Centers in Austin, Texas.

Youth strategies focus on engaging teens and preteens in educational, employment and empowerment efforts. They aim to improve young people's life chances and self-esteem through strategies ranging from pre-employment counseling to peer leadership training. The Work Force in Cambridge, Massachusetts, sets up links with the participants' parents and schools, provides additional academic instruction and pre-employment counseling, and organizes a series of "try-out" job situations.

Adult strategies focus on improving the educational and employment status of adults as the key to family empowerment. Project Match, a community-based, welfare-to-work program for residents of the Cabrini-Green housing development in Chicago, exhibits this approach. The program has found that "for many, leaving welfare is not an *event*... but rather a long and difficult *process* that involves false starts, setbacks, and incremental gains."[57] Project Match has thus developed a ladder, which recognizes that a continuum of activities count in an adult's process toward self-sufficiency. Activities recognized as legitimate range from writing stories with a child or serving on a tenant board to volunteering in a child care center or attending a high school equivalency program.[58]

Public-housing tenant/community-wide strategies, which often begin around a specific local need, represent a fourth approach. Many argue that a process of community transformation which enhances the social competence of its members offers the greatest possibility for long-term change. By shifting the focus from the individual to the habitability of the housing development and support offered, the possibilities for strengthening families are enhanced.[59] The Commonwealth Development in Brighton, Massachusetts, illustrates some of



The Commonwealth Development after renovation.
(photo by Gayle Epp)

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the successes, as well as the challenges that Boston tenants have encountered in pursuing this strategy. The development, which stood half empty in 1978, has been transformed into a physically attractive community with a strong focus on family support and community empowerment.

Other community development/family support strategies address the challenges of diversity. For example, both the Rainier Vista Family Center in Seattle, Washington, and The Welcome Project in Somerville, Massachusetts, have worked to engage newcomers in community life by offering a range of family support programs, with special attention to those tenants who are not English-proficient, as well as multicultural, community-building events.

Finally, in several cities there are empowerment strategies which focus on a larger geographic area within which public housing is situated. This fifth category might be called ***broader neighborhood strategies***. One program -- Community Building in Partnership (CBP, Inc.) in Baltimore, Maryland -- proposes community-wide programs to transform the systems that affect children and families, and to coordinate the delivery of programs such as job training, drug treatment, preventive health care, community policing, education, housing, and community gardens. Towards that goal, CBP, Inc. works with the Gilmor Homes public housing development in Baltimore. As one component of a broader community change strategy, Gilmor Homes' tenants are involved in efforts to redesign human service delivery on a neighborhood-wide basis.

The people involved in the efforts which are profiled in this book are working to make public housing a positive place for children and families. They envision public housing developments as centers for community building which offer real support for their residents. The projects described here demonstrate that public housing communities can become centers of neighborhood renewal, islands of hope for families in urban settings.

PROJECT UPLIFT

Location:
Greensboro, North Carolina

Program Operator:
UPLIFT, Inc. (non-profit organization)

Year Program Began:
1987

Type of Program:
Young child/parent

Key Program Components:
Child development center; family resource center (offers literacy, health, parenting activities); support program for homeless families; leadership development

Total Annual Budget:
$500,000

Primary Funding Sources:
Child Care Block Grant; Department of Health and Human Services; North Carolina Office of Prevention

Points of Distinction:
- Young child/parenting strategy broadened to community development focus.
- Plays important demonstration function as part of a statewide organization.

Population Served:
Predominantly African-American

Introduction

Project UPLIFT, in Greensboro, North Carolina, works with families in the Ray Warren Homes, a public housing community. By combining family support, maternal and child health, brokered services, and early childhood programming, Project UPLIFT models strategies that work for low-income families, and shares those experiences with other organizations and communities. The program exemplifies a young child/parenting approach which has in recent years broadened to include a stronger focus on community development. As part of a statewide organization, Project UPLIFT plays an important demonstration role for other communities interested in establishing family support programs.[1]

Community Context

Ray Warren Homes is a 235-unit, low-rise development operated by the Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA). Built in 1958, the orange brick buildings are bordered by a four-lane highway, a church and several streets of low- and moderate-income housing. The development has some green space, including a play area and trees. African-American families comprise 98 percent of the population, with single mothers heading 96 percent of the households.

Greensboro, the seat of Guilford County, is a medium-sized city (183,521 in population), which has worked hard in recent years to strengthen a system of support services for low-income children. Census figures from 1990 indicate that 18,362 families in the county with a child under the age of five live below the poverty level, and nearly 34,547 adults are illiterate.[2] The combination of a poorly skilled labor force and a low-wage job base makes it difficult for many to provide for a family. Greensboro is home to several colleges including North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and was an early base of civil rights activity. The first lunch counter sit-in occurred at the Greensboro Woolworth store. The Greensboro Housing Authority maintains conventional public housing developments as well as Section 8 housing, with an overall resident population of 6,678.

Over 250,000 North Carolina children live in poverty. According to the *1994 Kids Count Data Book*, North Carolina ranked forty-fourth (out of the fifty states and the District of

Columbia) in the percentage of low birth-weight babies, forty-fifth in the infant mortality rate, forty-third in the percentage of all births that are to single teens, thirtieth in the percentage of children in poverty, and thirty-seventh in the percentage of children in single- parent families. The state's national composite rank on these and other similar indicators is fortieth overall. Twenty-five percent of North Carolina adults have less than an eighth-grade education.[3]

Origins and History

Project UPLIFT began at Ray Warren Homes in 1987. Robin Britt, a lawyer, Vietnam veteran, and former U.S. Congressman, launched the program to demonstrate the potential for family-oriented services focused on both children and parents. A staunch supporter of children's programs during his time in Washington, and motivated by strong religious convictions and his own background as an orphan, Britt used his political savvy to raise funds, secure space and other resources, and gain media coverage as the program began. While other organizations lent support, it was definitely Britt's vision which shaped the project in the early days. He recalls those days:

> "Our challenge was to have families take control of their own lives. There was much more information available about the best practices in child development than in family support, so we learned a lot as we went along. We had to work hard to establish relationships of trust with the parents. Our ongoing presence in the development, which allowed us to listen to and affirm the parents, was as important as anything else."[4]

The Residents Council of Ray Warren Homes was involved in the initial planning, and some of their ideas -- such as a neighborhood resources exchange -- were included in the design of Project UPLIFT. As Britt notes, their advice on involving other parents was especially critical: "They knew better than anyone what would work."[5]

The first component of the project to be developed was a child development center for four-year-olds. With a nearby Methodist church willing to provide basement space for the center, and with

twenty slots for a full-day, year-round program, the daycare program slowly gained enrollment as the community's trust level increased. Recognizing the need to reach families with children of varied ages, the next stage in Project UPLIFT's evolution was the opening of a family resource center. Located in a Greensboro Housing Authority building, the center has developed a range of family literacy, health, parenting, and community development activities. In 1992, Project UPLIFT worked with the Pathways Homeless Shelter to develop a support program for homeless families, with the goal of having some families move into Ray Warren Homes.

Recently, the project has developed a leadership training component to further strengthen resident capacity. The evolution of the program from an effort which targeted four-year-olds to one that takes a community development approach reflects the perspectives of both public housing tenants and program staff members. The program continues to build and maintain its services to children, families, and the community. As UPLIFT Director Randy Johnston says:

> "We've always known intellectually that the equalizer is the whole child/family/community. We've evolved from the child and family and now we're into the community."[6]

Key Events

1987 Project UPLIFT operation begins.

1988 Child Development Center opens.

1989 Family Resource Center opens.

1990 Computer Learning, MOTHEREAD, and Maternal and Child Health programs start.

1990-91 First external evaluation of Project UPLIFT conducted by Penny.

1991 •Project UPLIFT and Early Childhood Initiative boards merge to form UPLIFT, Inc.

•Project UPLIFT continues as Model Demonstration Program at Ray Warren Homes.

1992 •Founder Robin Britt resigns to become Secretary of North Carolina Department of Human Resources.
•Accreditation of the child development center by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children).

1993 •UPLIFT, Inc. launches Comprehensive Child Development Program (modeled on Project UPLIFT).
•Collaborative family support program for homeless families launched with Pathways Homeless Shelter.

1994 Leadership training and community development program launched.

Organization and Governance

Project UPLIFT is a component of UPLIFT, Inc., a North Carolina statewide non-profit organization that models and facilitates cooperative efforts that promote the health and well-being of children, families, and communities. According to its mission statement, UPLIFT, Inc. helps "families confront and manage the pressures they face, and help[s] communities better use existing resources to give all families and children a chance for a promising and healthy future."[7]

Formed from the merger of Project UPLIFT and the Early Childhood Initiative (ECI), UPLIFT, Inc. has expanded its efforts significantly. In addition to Project UPLIFT, the other three components of UPLIFT, Inc. are:

- The Comprehensive Child Development Program (CCDP) which provides comprehensive family support services to 240 families in Guilford County.

- The Resource Center for Local Communities (RCLC) which provides information and technical assistance to North Carolina counties on better ways to serve families and children. This includes working with planning groups

on countywide efforts to implement North Carolina's Smart Start initiative.

- Through field operations in Wayne and Edgecombe counties, UPLIFT, Inc. works with local task forces in both areas to implement a strategy which combines early childhood development, education, human services, and economic development.

As a result of the merger between Project UPLIFT and the Early Childhood Initiative, and the departure of Robin Britt to head the North Carolina Department of Human Resources in late 1992 -- as well as the addition of the CCDP and RCLC -- UPLIFT, Inc. is facing the challenges of growth, including board and staff expansion and diversification, team building, and systems change.

UPLIFT, Inc. is governed by a board of directors comprised primarily of recognized community leaders, and business and human service agency representatives; low- and moderate-income parent representatives also serve. The board oversees all of UPLIFT Inc.'s endeavors. Discussion is underway about the need to have more parent representatives, as well as to create a structure to oversee Project UPLIFT. The UPLIFT, Inc. board has tentatively approved the creation of Project UPLIFT as a subsidiary corporation, with a board of directors comprised mainly of community residents. While the details of this transition remain unresolved, it will be carried out as part of the leadership development strategy.

Ten staff are employed by the project: three at the Child Development Center, a project director, an administrative assistant, a child care coordinator, a social worker, and specialists in family development, maternal and child health, and outreach. In addition, a family development specialist is based at the Pathways Shelter to provide support and transitional services to homeless families. Social work students from area colleges augment the team's work.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

During the early stages of Project UPLIFT, tenant input was critically important in shaping program offerings. Over time,

resident feedback has continued to determine the Project's focus. For example, at the Child Development Center, parents are involved in the Parent Action Committee. A Project UPLIFT board will be organized in the coming year, with the goal of building stronger community oversight. It is anticipated that the advisory role which the tenant organization has played will be formalized through this step.

Goals and Philosophy

Project UPLIFT attempts to implement family support principles which it has adapted from the Family Resource Coalition and the Family Development Program (New Mexico). Project UPLIFT sees its outreach and recruitment mission as twofold -- to touch the lives of families in need and to connect the broader community to their needs and potential.[8] Key principles which the program strives to implement exist on four levels: family, family/community, program, and program/community.

On the ***family level,*** the program:

- Recognizes that the parent is the primary teacher of the child.
- Promotes opportunities for families to identify their strengths, set their own goals, and make constructive changes in their lives.
- Designs a balanced approach in three areas; meeting basic family needs, child development, and parent development.

On the ***family/community level,*** the program:

- Recognizes that the community is integral to the life of the family and works with the families to build informal networks of support.
- Believes that families are experts on the needs of their community and gives them ownership in the development of programs and services.

At the ***program level***, Project UPLIFT:

- Recognizes that the relationship between staff workers and participants often serves as the catalyst for families to make life-altering changes.

- Acknowledges that frontline workers must have flexibility and authority to make decisions and access resources for families.

Finally, at the ***program/community level***, Project UPLIFT:

- Functions collaboratively with other service providers for the benefit of participants.
- Advocates for improved services and environments for families within the broader community.

Other Project UPLIFT materials discuss changing the health outcomes for infants, chances of school success for four-year-olds, education levels and employment possibilities for parents, life outlooks for families, and the systems that affect all communities.[9]

Program

Since Project UPLIFT uses primarily a parent/child strategy, much of its program addresses the needs of parents and young children. Still, Project UPLIFT has expanded its scope as participants' concerns have changed. In addition, the organization has placed an increased focus on enhancing tenant leadership.

Children: Four-year-olds at Ray Warren Homes benefit from a Child Development Center which offers a comprehensive program including basic kindergarten readiness, and music and computer programs. The Center uses the High/Scope curriculum, is licensed by the state at the highest possible level, emphasizes parent involvement, and recently received accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Center operates on a full-day (7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.), full-year schedule to accommodate parents who are working or in training and education programs. Located in Union United Methodist

Church, across the street from Ray Warren Homes, the Center also holds parenting classes that address a variety of issues.

MOTHEREAD/FATHEREAD, an innovative family literacy program, emphasizes the importance of parents reading to their children at an early age. Drop-in child care is provided at the Family Resource Center 15 to 20 hours per week for parents attending GED classes, parent training, and medical appointments. A Toy Lending Library allows parents to borrow age-appropriate toys to use with their children. The program helps parents understand how children learn through play and promotes parent/child bonding.

Parents: Parents can receive parenting classes at the Child Development Center -- ranging from budgeting to child development -- as well as a broad variety of services provided through the Family Resource Center. Staff members have remarked that this Center allows parents to learn "...alternative ways of parenting," and to realize that they are the "...continuing educators of their children." As one parent put it, "I learned better ways to punish my kids, to talk to them and listen to them...." The Center offers multifaceted programming, including a weekly pregnancy support group facilitated by the Maternal-Child Health Program. A donated van is available to Ray Warren residents for medical appointments, job interviews, and grocery shopping. Volunteers and staff offer driver education classes. The SHARE Food Program allows tenants to perform some type of community service in exchange for significantly reduced groceries.

The Ray Warren Neighborhood Exchange, housed in the Police Neighborhood Resource Center, is a source of used clothing and baby items donated by Ray Warren residents and others to the Family Resource Center. A community telephone allows residents to schedule job interviews or medical appointments, and connect with family members. Home visits by the Maternal-Child Health nurse assist parents by providing information on health issues and linking families with appropriate health resources. A computer-assisted learning program with resources from Apple Computer and the Glaxo Corporation is a state-of-the-art computer learning program that serves parents and their children. Case management

enables parents to set short-term and long-term goals with a family development specialist, who assists with brokering needed services in a coordinated fashion.

The Unity Club was founded by a parent who had participated in Family Resource Center activities. It is a club for teens aged thirteen to sixteen, where the focus is on community issues and problems. Club members also mentor younger children. Leadership development efforts enable families participating in Project UPLIFT activities to become more effective advocates for themselves and their community. One UPLIFT staff person noted that these efforts allow the people whom these policies affect to make policy changes. Similarly, a resident remarked that UPLIFT programs show them "...the importance of community unity."[10]

Homeless Family Support Services is a collaborative effort between the Greensboro Urban Ministry, the Greensboro Housing Authority, Bennett College, and UPLIFT (as the lead organization), with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Urban Ministry's Pathways Shelter provides temporary housing to homeless families, while Project UPLIFT, located less than one-half mile away, makes staff and resources available to work with Pathways families. Children are assessed at Pathways for health, developmental, and nutritional needs and parents receive similar support and a vocational assessment. An UPLIFT family specialist helps each family shape an individualized Family Services Plan to achieve goals based on the assessment, and performs other case management functions. The Housing Authority has pledged to give Pathways families priority placement in public housing at Ray Warren Homes.

Program participants range from parents of young children to other relatives who play a significant role in the life of a child, such as grandmothers or uncles. Many of the parents who first become involved through a younger child have remained involved with Project UPLIFT over several years.

Families at a gathering at Project UPLIFT. (photo by UPLIFT staff)

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Collaboration

The program has established collaborative relationships with a variety of local programs. The Greensboro Housing Authority provides rent-free space for the Family Resource Center. The Police Neighborhood Resource Center is a joint effort of the Greensboro Police Department and the Housing Authority. Both police officers and residents are available to answer questions and make referrals (on-site). GED classes are offered in conjunction with Guilford Technical Community College and the Greensboro Public Library (on-site and at Vance Chavis Community Library and Guilford Technical Community College). A Head Start program, operated by United Day Care Services, provides a half-day, nine-month program (on-site).

A Family Planning/Maternity Clinic as well as Child Health and Devon Street Clinics are offered by the Guilford County Health Department (off-site). The Job Training Partnership Act Program, a federally-funded program managed by the City of Greensboro, provides off-site job training as does the JOBS program offered by the Guilford County Department of Social Services (off-site). Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups are organized by the Substance Abuse Intervention Coordinator at the Crawford Center (on-site). Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups are organized by local scouting councils with volunteer leadership from the development (on-site). Finally, the Bennett College Single Parent Program provides support for single parents attending the college (off-site).

Funding

In 1994, Project UPLIFT had a budget of $499,973, with personnel expenses comprising three-fifths of the total. Funding for the project comes from the Child Care Block Grant (via the North Carolina Department of Human Resources), the Maternal and Child Health Care Project funded by the North Carolina Office of Prevention, a North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Homeless Families Support and Demonstration Grant, several private sources, and benefit events. UPLIFT, Inc. staff members provide grantwriting assistance to the project, as well as other forms of back-up.

Monitoring and Evaluation

During 1990-91, Dr. Judith M. Penny of University Research Associates conducted a process evaluation of the Child Development Center and Family Resource Center, and an outcome evaluation of the Child Development Center program. The outcome evaluation found that the center had succeeded in providing an outstanding early childhood program.[11]

Dr. Penny is also conducting an outcome evaluation of the Maternal and Child Health Program. Preliminary results indicated that residents were quite satisfied with the program. The home visits were especially important in providing a needed communication link and support system for the participants. The evaluator recommended that the next step was to assist residents in "utilizing their own family resources and community resources to meet the health, nutritional, and social needs of their families."[12]

In addition, two other evaluations have examined Project UPLIFT's work within the broader context of UPLIFT, Inc. An evaluation report prepared in 1993 by P. David Kurtz for the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, one of UPLIFT's major funders, included interviews and surveys conducted with Ray Warren Homes residents, staff, and allies. Kurtz describes Project UPLIFT:

> "[It's] a rich environment to develop ways to support and empower children, families and the community. It continues to be UPLIFT's nursery for trying out ideas and looking at the impact that UPLIFT's principles have had on a community over time."[13]

UPLIFT also has a contract with the University of North Carolina Human Services Research and Design Laboratory for a formative evaluation process which should lead to the implementation of a "results-oriented" management approach.

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

Project UPLIFT perceives the need to establish stronger linkages with the schools, particularly since as children leave the Child Development Center for elementary school, they often encounter a less welcoming educational environment. Indeed, the schools have traditionally felt inaccessible to public housing parents.[14] Two

initial steps have been taken: elementary, middle and high school counselors are spending time at Ray Warren Homes, and administrators have met with parents in the development. Project UPLIFT has also implemented strategies to improve residents' skill levels, and to link that work to economic development efforts. As parents gain greater confidence in their parenting abilities, the importance of employment that pays decently grows. Finally, Project UPLIFT has come to realize the value of investing in developing community leadership. The challenge for the future is to deepen this work, so that community ownership of Project UPLIFT's work remains strong. With its history of work within the state and extensive political alliances both in North Carolina and Washington, UPLIFT is at the cutting edge of systematic family support reform, and is better-positioned than many programs to tackle these challenges successfully.

Reflections

Linda Jones, former participant in Project UPLIFT, current UPLIFT, Inc. board member:
"When recipients of services are always on the receiving side, and when they are treated differently than a person that is not on the poverty level is treated, after a certain period of time, it breeds a mentality that keeps them from progressing. So what happens is, the community doesn't look to each other, it looks to the providers for everything. They learn what they expect of them and they don't grow. Areas where children do better, in my opinion, are where the people structure and plan, and make rules for their neighborhood. We've gotten away from that. However, neighborhoods where people participate, where they're at the decision-making level, those neighborhoods do better."

Angelia Lester, Director of Family Services, Project UPLIFT:
"Family support in public housing is networking with families to reach out to other agencies as needed, making many referrals, connecting residents with the broader community, developing programs as needed within the community and explaining what services are available to them. There is something, or some connection that we can make for everything. Every family is in a different position, every family has crises. I have crises which are

no different than those of the families that I'm working with...we are all human beings, and we all can grow. We all can look at our mistakes, our barriers, and get over them. I've learned that families have their own solutions -- to be open, to be readily available to share with them, when they're sharing a crisis with me, to say "that's very normal, that can happen to people. What is the next step that you would like to take?" To help them visualize that things can be better. You have to learn what fits the family and community and be creative enough to do it. Being in the community, I've learned that you can't focus on one way, you have to focus on many ways."

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FAMILY LEARNING CENTERS

Location:
Austin, Texas
Program Operator:
Austin Housing Authority
Year Program Began:
1991
Type of Program:
Young child/parent
Key Program Components:
On-site education, training and community programs in early childhood, afterschool, parenting, and adult education
Total Annual Budget:
$1.5 million
Primary Funding Sources:
Even Start Family Literacy, Gateway, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Americorps, United Way, Austin Community Foundation, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Points of Distinction:
- Strong linkages with schools.
- Collaborative relationship with a university.

Population Served:
52% Mexican-American; 43% African-American; 5% white

Introduction

The Housing Authority in Austin, Texas, has established Family Learning Centers (FLC) in seven housing developments. Each FLC is an on-site education, training and community resource center which tenants use at their own convenience. The centers offer education programs for children, youth, young adults, and parents, as well as community organizing and leadership training initiatives and family entrepreneurship. Designed to help transform the schools which serve children who live in Austin Housing Authority (AHA) developments, the centers are working laboratories for Austin Independent School District (AISD) teachers and community educators. Teachers try new ideas and curriculum approaches, and develop and use learning materials more appropriate to the needs of learners in AHA developments. The strong collaboration which has been forged with the University of Texas at Austin to provide technical assistance, tutoring, and mentoring offers an interesting model of a partnership between a public housing authority and an institution of higher education.[1]

The leadership role of the housing authority in establishing Family Learning Centers in several sites, and the strong collaborative relationships which have been built with the public schools and the state university, are noteworthy aspects of this program.

Community Context

The Family Learning Centers are based in seven of the AHA's fifteen family developments. The developments were constructed between 1939 and 1983 and include row housing as well as detached apartments. Developments range in size from 90 to 216 units. They are clustered in Austin's low-income neighborhoods, away from the elegant state capital building and the campus of the University of Texas. Neighborhoods surrounding AHA developments have crime rates 270 percent higher than citywide averages.

Single women head 78 percent of Austin Housing Authority households; 35 percent receive AFDC benefits. The average annual income of families who live in the housing authority units is $5,127. The ethnic mix in the developments with Family

Learning Centers is 52 percent Mexican-American, 43 percent African-American, and 5 percent white.[2]

Origins and History

In 1991, at the instigation of Dr. Lodis Rhodes, then chairperson of the AHA Board of Directors, and a professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, the concept for the first Family Learning Center was developed. The Austin Housing Authority, the LBJ School and the Winn Elementary School of the Austin Independent School District were involved in this early planning. In June of that year, a pilot program was implemented at two Austin developments. Ten master teachers from nearby schools provided instruction using a multi-media curriculum. They were asked to employ teaching methods for gifted and talented students. They were also asked to concentrate on developing learners' creative thinking and life skills.

The Austin Housing Authority has since expanded the program to a network of multipurpose family resource centers at seven developments. In addition, the computer lab at the Zavala Elementary School serves as a program site. Each learning center strives to increase student achievement, self-esteem, school attendance, and parent/teacher involvement as well as to deter drug and gang involvement. With additional funding from Even Start and Gateway grants, programming at the early childhood and adults levels has been added to complement youth-focused activities. The learning centers are well-equipped, risk-free environments where learning opportunities are presented as a family affair. Group activities for all ages promote positive peer pressure toward achievement and healthy life styles. They are, according to AHA Director of Education Toni Williams, a "one-stop shop for families."[3]

Key Events

1991 • Austin Housing Authority, in collaboration with Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs of the University of Texas and Winn Elementary School, develops concept for Family Learning Center.

- Summer Pilot program established in two developments.

1992
- Expansion to three additional family developments.
- Neighborhood Longhorn Program starts.
- Advisory Board forms.

1993
- Texas Education Authority awards Even Start grant; program expands adult programs.
- Two additional sites are added.

1994 165 adults are enrolled in literacy programs.

Organization and Governance

The Family Learning Centers are a program of the Austin Housing Authority's Department of Education. The housing authority provides core support to the program; including clerical and fundraising assistance, in addition to serving as the fiscal sponsor to the project. A Family Learning Center Advisory Board of Directors -- comprised of tenants, teachers, principals, and public and non-profit officials -- serves as a sounding board for project staff members. Formed a year after the program's inception, the board of directors meet monthly to discuss the current challenges and future growth of the program.

Under the guidance of the Austin Housing Authority director of education, Family Learning Center staff members consist of a coordinator, educational coordinator, a parent/child specialist, three social workers, a staff liaison for each site and two secretaries. Fifty part-time teachers are involved with the program over the course of the year. At each site, two parents and two teenagers serve as teaching assistants.

AHA Department of Education staff members (educators, social workers, resident employees and volunteers) work closely with the resident organizations and schools to provide case management for individual families and to connect family members with appropriate service providers.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

The Family Learning Center program is very committed to engaging parents to become effective advocates for their children.

There are a variety of ways for parents to become involved in the program (as participants and as volunteers). In turn, parents have helped to shape the growth of the learning centers through their involvement and feedback. As a result of their experience with the learning centers, many parents go on to become active school volunteers or members of school parent organizations.

The involvement of younger parents in the learning centers has had a positive impact on the tenant councils. Many of these parents, as they gained confidence in their own abilities to advocate for positive change, have become involved with resident organizations. This has resulted in a more diverse group of younger leaders in developments across the city.

Goals and Philosophy

The Family Learning Centers are based on the philosophy that learners rise (or sink) to the academic and behavioral standards set for them. The program's founders "do not believe poverty is a useful indicator of intellectual endowment."[4] The FLC approach creates activities based on high expectations for learners and a friendly, supportive environment which accords high status to both learner and mentor. The central focus of the program's teaching is on reading and social skills for children and advocacy for parents as it relates to their children's education.[5]

The goals of the FLCs are to:

- Make learning fun in unique and creative ways.
- Involve parents in the teaching process.
- Increase student achievement (cognitive, social and emotional); self-esteem, and attendance.
- Reduce "learning loss" during the summer.
- Produce a gain in academic performance.
- Increase student enrollment in gifted and talented programs.
- Reduce retention and assignments to special education.
- Increase parent involvement in priority schools.
- Promote Adult Basic Education and job readiness skills.
- Enhance professional development of AISD master teachers.
- Undertake research and development of useful curriculum materials.
- Build developmental skills for three-year-olds.

Program

Family Learning Centers offer creative and challenging learning opportunities for residents of Austin Housing Authority developments. The activities emphasize individualized, self-paced instruction and focus on real problems -- those defined by residents. They utilize a process of cooperative, community-oriented problem-solving. Each learning center operates within the community, either in a large apartment or a community space. Throughout the course of the day, different components of the program are in operation, allowing maximum space utilization. A slightly different mix of activities operates at each development, in response to the needs and interests of the individual communities.

Children: With Even Start funds, the Family Learning Centers provide a year-round school readiness program for children aged three to seven. The classes are geared to provide a rich and nurturing environment promoting social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. The curriculum is primarily teacher-developed, but draws on the High/Scope and *Sesame Street* Parent Education Program models.

After the school day ends, the centers house programs for children aged eight to fourteen. Volunteer tutors and mentors help youth with homework, engage them on a personal level, and participate with them in sports and play activities. Through the Neighborhood Longhorn Program, prizes are awarded to learners who succeed in school, maintain satisfactory school attendance, and complete book reports. Teachers provide year-round, multimedia instruction focusing on literacy, critical thinking and life skills. Examples of learning activities include: Read-A-Thon Sleepovers, a student newspaper, environmental awareness trips, and youth leadership and computer literacy programs. Public safety, fitness and sports activities have been added in several sites.

Parents: The program seeks to increase parents' awareness and confidence in using school and community-based services for their children; increase parents' self-esteem, social skills and literacy skills; and increase the number and level of participation of Austin Housing Authority parents in existing literacy programs. The Gateway Program supports Adult Basic

Family Learning Center (FLC) parents are encouraged to read to their children. (photo by FLC staff)

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Education, ESL, and English and Spanish GED preparatory classes. A childcare program which includes parenting skills and life skills classes for parents is also offered. These programs generally operate during the day when older children are in school.

Through the active collaboration with the school district, several changes in the residents' relationship with the schools have occurred. Parents have gained greater confidence in their ability to advocate for their children. School personnel are spending more time in public housing developments, thereby gaining a greater understanding of the children and their home environment. Some PTA meetings have been held in public housing developments, sending a clear signal to parents that their school involvement is welcomed.

During the summer months, the learning centers' schedule changes somewhat but the basic program components remain the same. Two of the program's goals are to keep children from losing ground academically during the summer and to help kids deal with transition points, when they are often most vulnerable.

Collaboration

The Family Learning Centers bring together the three essential elements needed to promote healthy development for families: home, school, and community. School district teachers and principals are key to the success of the program. From this base, links have been forged with a variety of individuals and institutions from the private and public sectors. Partnerships have been formed with the University of Texas at Austin (including the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs) to provide research, technical assistance, and student interns. The Neighborhood Longhorn Program uses college athletes to promote the educational success of eight- to fourteen-year-olds through personal contact, tutoring, prizes and scholarships, saving bonds, and donations of sporting equipment. The Austin Police Department provides awards and presentations to children aged three to seven for their academic attendance and achievements. It also offers pro-education, anti-drug, and anti-gang presentations. The Texas Education Agency provides staff development and training opportunities. Finally, KLRU (a local public television

station) provides the *Sesame Street* Parent Education Program, which offers parent training modules and materials.

Funding

The annual budget for the Family Learning Centers is $1.5 million, of which $545,000 is for personnel expenses. Key funding comes from the Even Start Family Literacy and Gateway Adult Education programs (through the Texas Education Agency), the Youth Sports Program and Drug Elimination Program (both HUD-funded), Americorps, the United Way, the Austin Community Foundation, and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

Monitoring and Evaluation

External evaluation of the program has been limited to funder site visits. Austin Housing Authority officials, however, collect anecdotal information about successes to inform program planning: they include children who become responsible in their school attendance and make headway in their academic performance; a girl with a wonderful singing voice who learns to appreciate her talent; a parent who sees improvements in her relationships with her children; an angry boy who successfully spends a week at overnight camp. In addition, the program tracks basic participation and educational attainment information for the children, youth and adults who are involved.

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

The Family Learning Centers have identified three primary challenges: the need for better documentation and evaluation, the need to replicate the program in other AHA developments, and the need to disseminate knowledge to similar organizations. Increased attention to documentation and evaluation will be critical to the programs' future growth, as will extending work to other Austin Housing Authority developments, and expanding programming for teenagers. Finally, since other Texas housing authorities have expressed interest in replicating the FLC model, the program must strengthen its internal capacity to disseminate its expertise to others.

Reflections

Toni Williams, Director, AHA Department of Education:
"I have watched parents who were very uncomfortable in school settings, often because of their own negative experiences, start to hang out in one of the Family Learning Centers. They might begin by enrolling on one of our GED or ESL classes and then volunteer to help in the afterschool program. Very often one of our staff would accompany the parent to a few teacher/parent conferences at the school and then help her figure out the next steps. I have seen parents who were fearful of following through if a problem with their child arose at the school soon become strong advocates who had the confidence to ask the tough questions. Other parents might need more support from staff to get to that point. They have become very goal-oriented for themselves and their children. Several public housing parents now work in school offices and many more are involved in parent/teacher organizations. We've really helped break down the barriers between the schools and the public housing developments."

Sharon Brown, Vice President of Thurmond Heights Resident Council and resident mom at Thurmond Heights Family Learning Center:
"The Family Learning Centers let kids know that there's someone besides their parents who cares about their future. They provide an alternative to the streets for our children. Right now I would like to see the program expand to have more available for our teenagers.

"The FLC in my development has involved a lot of parents. When parents saw their children get excited, they began to come in and get active. Some of these parents have become part of the Resident Council. People are more motivated now that they see things starting to change."

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THE WORK FORCE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT PREVENTION PROGRAM

Location:
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Program Operator:
Cambridge Housing Authority

Year Program Began:
1984

Type of Program:
Youth dropout and unemployment prevention

Key Program Components:
Educational enrichment, employability skills training, "tryout" jobs, work site mentoring, educational and career development counseling

Total Annual Budget:
$383,000

Primary Funding Sources:
U.S. Departments of Labor, and Housing and Urban Development; Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development

Points of Distinction:
- Collaboration with schools and employers.
- Early intervention.
- Creation of a "conspiracy of nurturance."

Population Served:
40% African-American; 28% Hispanic; 16% other (mostly Haitian); 16% white

Introduction

The Work Force Youth Unemployment Prevention Program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, aims to break the "generational cycle of poverty and dependence prevalent in the public housing community."[1] The program believes in early intervention and targets adolescents residing in public housing as young as age thirteen. These youth are legally too young to hold a job, but through The Work Force receive an "educational stipend" to attend pre-employment classes. The program also aims to help ease the transition from junior high to high school through advising, and by providing younger high school participants with older Work Force friends.

Unlike other youth programs with largely recreational approaches, The Work Force has a decidedly professional and academic focus: It teaches participants the skills, values, and habits necessary to find and maintain a job, and also offers them supplementary academic classes and tutoring. When the participants are ready, the program places them in after-school "try-out" jobs in both the public and private sector. This experience provides young people with a glimpse of the working world and a chance to test their abilities in it, while receiving support and advice from The Work Force staff. As participants near the completion of high school, The Work Force counsels them to consider college admission.

Community Context

A popular image of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is that of a priviliged community, home to the ivy-covered brick walls of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In fact, the city hosts an economically diverse population; 10.7 percent live below the poverty line, and 1,311 families reside in public housing.[2] Sixty-seven percent of these families are headed by a single-parent, and 91 percent are classified as "very low income."[3] Minorities comprise 67 percent of the Cambridge public housing population, with African-Americans forming 50.6 percent, Hispanics 14.4 percent, whites 32.9 percent, and other racial or ethnic groups 2.1 percent.

The Work Force operates on site in the three largest public housing developments in Cambridge: Jefferson Park, Roosevelt Towers, and Newtowne Court/Washington Elms. The

developments differ in physical structure: Jefferson Park consists of a mid-rise and several three-story brick buildings; Roosevelt Towers is structured as low-rise apartment buildings, with one mid-rise for adults living without children; and Newtowne Court/Washington Elms sprawls over several blocks in cube-like brick low-rise buildings. In spite of such outward differences, all three developments share a critical need for social services.

Origins and History

The Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) initially conceived The Work Force as a program to address the need for adult employment and educational services at Jefferson Park, the largest of Cambridge's housing developments sheltering families. CHA staff decided to develop a program for youth to focus specifically on school dropout and joblessness prevention.

Early in the 1980s, the CHA worked with the Boston Housing Authority and a key state representative to establish the Supportive Services Program, which provided financial support for employment and education programs for public housing residents. Their work paid off when they received a grant in 1983 to convert Jefferson Park's deteriorating teen center into the first of three youth unemployment prevention program sites.

Initially, Jefferson Park parents were concerned that eliminating the teen center would deprive youth of a safe place where they could "blow off steam," and that the unemployment prevention program's highly-structured, academically-focused format would seem like additional "school time" to youth. The worries were dispelled when a new teen recreational center, the Rindge Shelter, opened nearby. Kids could now blow off steam at the Rindge Shelter and work to improve their futures in what would become The Work Force program.

By 1984, The Work Force was established. The program grew steadily until it was soon serving over 100 youth per year in three developments. In 1990, the program was selected by the Ford Foundation and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government for an Innovations in State and Local Government Award. At the same time, The Work Force was notified that its primary funding source, the entire Supportive Services Program, was being eliminated because of cuts in state funds.

This loss of funding caused The Work Force to lay off all but

one staff member and shut down two sites. The Work Force program at Roosevelt Towers, the site closest to bus routes and the public high school, was kept open, relying partially on the $100,000 Innovations Award to keep running. Realizing, however, that the program would need a more stable, long-term funding base to continue, the CHA's director of tenant services began to develop a more diverse base of public and private funders. Aided in part by national publicity from a news profile on ABC television, The Work Force marshaled resources to re-open the program at full capacity in September 1991.

Key Events

1983
- Successful lobbying effort for state-funded support services for public housing.
- Jefferson Park Teen center converted into the first youth unemployment prevention program site.

1984
- The Work Force program begins.
- Rindge Shelter Teen Center opens.

1990
- The Work Force wins the Ford Foundation and Harvard University Kennedy School of Government Innovations Award.
- Supportive Services Program (primary funding source) eliminated.

1991 The Work Force re-opens at prior capacity with new funding.

1992 Efforts to replicate The Work Force at other public housing authorities begin.

Organization and Governance

The Work Force is a program of the Cambridge Housing Authority and is situated within its Tenant Services Department. The Housing Authority thus provides ultimate oversight to the initiative. More recently, a separate nonprofit corporation (Pathways Institute) has been established to oversee dissemination of The Work Force approach to youth unemployment prevention.

Day-to-day operations of The Work Force are overseen by the program director, who is responsible for supervising the staff, maintaining collaborations with other agencies, and making curricular and policy decisions. The program director reports to the CHA Director of Tenant Services. The director of tenant services is responsible for the program's fundraising and dissemination efforts. The two directors work together on hiring and policy issues, and also plan new initiatives. The program director also coordinates with other CHA departments on administrative issues.

In addition to a program director, The Work Force staff includes three teacher/counselors, a job developer, a school liaison, and three part-time Homework Center coordinators. The CHA Director of Tenant Services and clerical staff members spend a portion of their time on the program. The Work Force teacher/counselors are considered the "backbone" of the program: They are responsible for recruiting and enrolling students, teaching classes, counseling individual youth, acting as adult role models, and serving as the primary link to parents and other family members.[4] While each teacher/counselor is responsible for overseeing the development of 30-35 children, Work Force classes are taught in manageable groups of 8-10 students.

The Work Force staff members also receive health, leadership, and substance-abuse training from groups such as the Mount Auburn Prevention Center, the Cambridge and Somerville Program for Alcohol Rehabilitation (CASPAR), the Cambridge Substance Abuse Task Force, and Cambridge Cares About AIDS.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

The Work Force is seeking to deepen parental involvement in the program. Parents receive one teacher/counselor home visit each semester, but are not otherwise heavily involved. Still, CHA Director of Tenant Services Steven Swanger states that such visits have been "successful in engaging more parents in the program." For example, a few Work Force parents act as part-time coordinators at The Work Force Homework Centers, and others serve as chaperons on college tours and field trips. The Work Force also holds events such as Open Houses and the end-of-the-year Awards Ceremony where parents can meet with teachers and with each other, and celebrate what their children have achieved.

There is not, however, a well-developed collaboration between The Work Force and local tenant organizations.

Goals and Philosophy

The Work Force program description states that its primary goal is "to break the generational cycle of poverty and dependence common to public housing residents through unemployment prevention with youth."[5] Indeed, The Work Force was founded on a few basic principles: early and highly-structured intervention, a holistic approach to youth development, a client-centered approach, and close association with parents and schools. The program's goals and objectives have grown and evolved through the years, with different staff and participants bringing new ideas and elements to the program.

The Work Force has nine objectives:

1. To build self-esteem and self-concept.
2. To expose young people to new experiences, broadening each individual's world view.
3. To teach critical life skills in problem solving, decision making, setting and achieving goals, and conflict resolution.
4. To enhance school attendance and academic performance.
5. To prevent participants from dropping out of school.
6. To increase access to post-secondary education.
7. To expose youth to a variety of work settings and career possibilities.
8. To develop job readiness and job search skills.
9. To increase employment acquisition and retention capabilities.[6]

The Work Force acts to remove the invisible barrier between "project kids" and the broader community, a barrier which prejudices the youths' employability potential. Secondary goals include prevention of substance abuse, crime, violence, destruction of property, and teen pregnancy.

Students participating in a class at The Work Force. (photo by Work Force staff)

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Program

The Work Force believes its program of introducing youth to the working world succeeds because it is coupled with educational enrichment, employability skills training, work site mentoring, and career development counseling. Collaborating with schools, parents and social service agencies, The Work Force's year-round program offers a comprehensive approach which aims to develop program participants' self-esteem, self-awareness, decision-making and other life skills, job readiness skills, academic competence and a sense of empowerment. Participants are paid for both Work Force class time and "try-out" employment time, and are expected to behave professionally (good attendance, punctual arrival, attentiveness) in both settings. A "no school, no work" policy (miss a day of school, miss a day of work) encourages students to maintain a strong attendance record and helps them to consider the critical connection between education and a career.

Classes and seminars prepare students to enter the world of work by teaching them the skills, habits, and values necessary to obtain and maintain employment. In **beginning level classes** (8th and 9th grade), students learn decision-making, conflict resolution, goal-setting, communication, values clarification, and money management skills, using experiences from school, home, and the public housing environment as "laboratories." **Intermediate level seminars** (10th and 11th grade) run parallel to students' "try-out jobs," and are meant to deepen the understanding of the previously-learned skills, habits, and values which are now being tested in the workplace. Intermediate seminars also help students plan their futures by identifying skills and interests and looking closely at those which can be developed into specific careers; they also begin to look at college admissions possibilities and procedures. **Advanced level classes** (12th grade) provide students with a forum for evaluating their weekly work experience, a place to develop specific job-search skills (e.g., applications, resumes, interviewing techniques), and further college counseling.[7]

A basic curriculum has been developed for each program level, but teacher/counselors try out new ideas and lesson plans with the approval of the director. As Program Director Stephen Davis notes, "There is a lot of room for

experimentation." Ideas from the youth participants can also add to the curriculum. In one instance, participants' requests for First Aid/CPR training led to the creation of a new program component dealing with health, nutrition, and safety.

Homework Centers serve as additional academic support for Work Force participants. Staffed by part-time coordinators and volunteer tutors from local colleges and businesses, the centers allow Work Force participants to receive academic help. The hours of work at try-out jobs for these students are reduced until their academic performance improves.

Tours and field trips to local and out-of-state colleges and universities expose participants to the options available to them and help them visualize themselves as college students. During the two- to five-day tours, the participants sleep in college dormitories, eat in dining halls, sit in on classes, speak with students (Work Force or Cambridge public school alumnae, whenever possible), attend sporting and cultural events, and meet with admissions officers.[8]

"Try-Out" employment places participants in a series of "try-out" jobs, with a different work placement each semester. These part-time jobs, each lasting between twelve and fifteen weeks, expose students to a variety of work settings. Work sites include both large and small businesses, with private sector placements favored over those in the public sector.[9] Entry-level work is the norm, but placement in "dead-end" jobs, such as those in fast food restaurants, is avoided.

The Work Force pays the base wage of $4.25/hour to its participants, but asks employers to supplement this minimum wage as participants gain experience. This arrangement encourages employers to offer positions to inexperienced youth and to spend time mentoring and training them. In order to maintain a high level of support for both the employers and young workers, the Work Force job developer visits all work sites bi-weekly, monitoring attendance and work performance, and resolving problems between employers and workers as necessary.[10]

Counseling and case management are provided by teacher/counselors, who often serve as the mediating link between schools, employers, parents, and students. Teacher/counselors meet regularly with the school liaison to see how students are doing in school and with the job developer to monitor their job performance. They also make an effort to go to all of the junior high and high school graduations of their students. Such extra involvement is recognized by the students: Student Nadia Allen says, "They're more like your friend; They're not just teachers."[11]

The school liaison also plays a large role in case management. She monitors school attendance and performance records, ensures that all participants receive the school-based services they need, plans for youth with special needs, provides linkages between home and school, arranges tutoring services, and encourages and facilitates access to post-secondary education.[12]

Home visits to parents each semester allow teachers, counselors and parents to discuss how the children are doing in the program, to set common goals for the children, and to establish a relationship with parents so they feel comfortable having their children in the program. Parents are welcomed to offer any input or to participate in the program as homework coordinators. The Work Force describes this relationship with the parents, together with its link to schools and employers, as a "conspiracy of nurturance" -- a network of people collaborating to ensure the healthy development of youth.[13]

The Work Force serves 100-125 youth per year, most between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. The students attend eight different elementary (K-8th grade) public schools, as well as one public high school, and a few private, parochial schools. The ethnic breakdown is 40 percent African-American, 28 percent Hispanic, 16 percent other minorities (primarily Haitians), and 16 percent white. Twenty percent are court-involved, and 38 percent are classified by their schools as learning disabled.[14]

Participants hear about the program through many different sources. Some come recommended by public school teachers or guidance counselors; many others learn through friends and

relatives who have been previous participants. Several participants cited the "pocket money" they received through paid class time and employment as a large incentive to participating in the program.[15]

Collaboration

The Cambridge Chamber of Commerce helps The Work Force and Cambridge businesses offer job placements to Work Force participants. The Cambridge Department of Human Services offers recreational activities and employment positions in its after-school youth programs, a federal free lunch program, and the services of the Youth Employment Agency. A dropout subcommittee of the Cambridge School Committee works with The Work Force program director to keep kids in school. The Just-A-Start Corporation (JAS) helped implement a summer construction project in which a Work Force crew and JAS supervisor renovated the Roosevelt Towers' office and classroom space, using practical math, construction, and team-building skills.

The New England Consortium of Black Admissions Counselors brings admissions officers and recruiters to the program to speak with participants and organize college tours. The Appalachian Mountain Club and Youth Enrichment Services provide free camping and ski equipment to the program to take participants on ski trips. The Citizens Scholarship Foundation of America provides matching funds and technical assistance to The Work Force for a scholarship endowment, through which The Work Force offers modest scholarships to its graduates who go on to post-secondary education. The Middlesex County Juvenile Probation works with The Work Force on the cases of program participants who are court-involved. The Youth Workers' Alliance of Greater Boston provides a support network of youth-serving agencies to the program. Finally, Public/Private Ventures helped The Work Force institute the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP) curriculum, workshops for Work Force staff members, and in early planning of a national demonstration project.

The employers selected to serve as Work Force "try-out" employment sites are also important collaborators. The sites range from law firms to politicians' offices, daycare centers, banks, hospitals, local schools and universities, florists, and other small

businesses. A few of the 1993-94 employers were: ACE Hardware, Cambridge City Hall (the Mayor's Office), Cambridge City Hospital, and Harvard University's Department of Afro-American Studies.

Funding

The Work Force's total operating budget for fiscal year 1994 was $383,252. The Housing Authority provides space for the program, accounting, and payroll support on an in-kind basis. Sixty-three percent of the budget is publicly funded by federal, state, and local sources, including Employment Resources, Inc. (U.S. Department of Labor Summer Youth Employment and Training Program Funds), the Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A third of the budget is funded by corporate foundation grants.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Work Force was evaluated in 1988 by Dr. Andrew Hahn of the Center for Human Resources at the Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University.[16] Hahn's study indicated that The Work Force population is significantly more vocationally deficit-ridden, lacking in self-esteem, and "at-risk" than those typically enrolled in employment and training programs nationally. Hahn found that 14 percent of Work Force youth had health problems (three times greater than youth enrolled in training programs nationwide); 46 percent had social, legal or family problems; and at least one-third had academic deficits. He found that many Work Force participants needed significant remedial assistance with retention skills (problem-solving on the job) and functional computation (using numbers in daily situations).

Hahn also found that employers hold the program in high esteem: 79 percent were willing to take Work Force participants back for additional program cycles, and 83 percent were pleased with the students' work. Employers were particularly appreciative of the regular flow of communication with the program staff.

Follow-up on youth who completed or left the program showed employment rates to be higher than those found for low-income minority youth in the United States, and slightly lower than the average for all American high school students.[17] Since the

program's inception, participants have maintained a constant 80 percent job retention rate. The "inactivity rate" for the program (youth who are not currently employed and not seeking employment) is 2 percent for former Work Force participants, as compared to 10-20 percent for similar populations nationwide.

The Work Force plans to mount another third-party evaluation when it has adequate funds. It also conducts its own evaluation by surveying its graduates each year. The survey showed, for example, that after the 1992-93 school year, eight out of ten of its graduating seniors matriculated to college. The employers of Work Force youth also evaluate the participants after each cycle. A certain degree of monitoring is also done through report cards and attendance records of Work Force participants.

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

The Work Force teacher/counselors find it difficult to help students who have histories of trouble in family or school. Similarly, it is hard to give equal attention to all students, since needier students require more time. Adequately serving all students *and* "at-risk" students is thus a primary challenge.

Finding and maintaining employers is a second hurdle, as the job developer must constantly work to ensure that lines of communication remain open between employers and the program. A third challenge is developing relationships with the schools. For reasons of confidentiality, many schools are reluctant to share their lists of students who are at-risk. Without access to these lists, The Work Force must rely on recommendations from individual teachers and guidance counselors, some of whom have cultivated an on-going relationship with The Work Force. School collaboration on referrals is spotty, with certain schools and teachers very helpful and others less cooperative.

Reaching younger and older youth is a fourth challenge. The Work Force would like to extend its program "downward" to reach public housing youth as young as age eight with a program focused on education and broadening horizons; and "upward," to continue working with its participants after they have graduated from high school or while they are in college. Both these goals present implementation and funding challenges.

Finally, there are plans in progress to have The Work Force program serve as the prototype for a national demonstration

project, where Work Force-like programs would be established in several cities across the country. Mounting a national demonstration project, however, brings additional work and responsibility. There are concerns that the time and energy spent on the national demonstration would detract from the local program.

Reflections

Gary Logan, Work Force teacher/counselor:
"The main lesson I've learned is that what I'm doing is not so much based on changing [the participants'] lives, but rather on empowering them so that they can make a difference in their own lives and the lives of their peers. I'm more there to listen....The program is about getting young people to realize their own sense of power, that they can develop their own sense of self-respect and autonomy, and they can figure out their place in society. It's about getting them to realize that it doesn't matter where you come from: you can still do whatever you want with your life."

Nadia Allen, Work Force participant (who worked at the Cambridge City Hospital assisting a dietician):
"[The Work Force] helps you find jobs that you can't find on your own. Like at a hospital: it's not that easy to get a job there; if we were just to walk in ourselves, we probably wouldn't get to work there.

"It's helped me take life a bit more seriously. Like before, I didn't really think about college, or about how much it costs. But now I realize that I want to go, but I also realize that money for college is a problem."

Nikisha Hollins and Rayschell McCants, Work Force participants:
"They (The Work Force) care for the youth. They're the only grown-ups around who really help us out; they even help us with college and with our resumes. They give out scholarships and take us on college tours. They want to see us have better futures."

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PROJECT MATCH

Location:
Chicago, Illinois

Program Operator:
Winfield-Moody Health Center (services) and Erikson Institute (research)

Year Program Began:
1985

Type of Program:
Adult welfare-to-work

Key Program Components:
Job development, service linkage, job and school retention support, help with transitions; Kids Match offers service linkages for children

Total Annual Budget:
$589,000 for service and research components

Primary Funding Sources:
Illinois Department of Public Aid, Department of Health and Human Services

Points of Distinction:
- Long-term commitment to participants.
- Flexibility of program allows appropriate modifications.
- Strong and integrated research component.

Population Served:
Predominantly African-American

Introduction

Project Match is a combined service and research welfare-to-work program that serves, for the most part, residents of the Cabrini-Green housing development in Chicago. The program is built around the idea that moving from welfare to work is, for long-term welfare recipients, a difficult and lengthy process, not a single event. Project Match provides varied, customized and family-focused services to its participants.[1] Its goal is to get clients on a track from dependency to self-sufficiency, keep them on it, and help them move ahead. With nearly a decade of experience, Project Match's efforts are being closely watched by policy makers and practitioners. Mary Jo Bane and David Ellwood, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services officials, write that "the best analyses of the processes by which very disadvantaged welfare recipients achieve self-sufficiency have been done by Project Match."[2]

Community Context

The facilities in which Project Match is based are located in the neighborhood of Chicago's Cabrini-Green development, a short distance from the exclusive Gold Coast, one of the wealthiest city neighborhoods in the United States, and close to other gentrifying areas. Built between 1942 and 1961, Cabrini-Green is the third-largest public housing development in the country. Its seventy-one acres are dotted with 23 high rises and 58 two-story row houses. In addition to the 2,410 apartments occupied by 7,000 residents, there are 1,200 vacant units in the development. The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of commercial and light industrial development, along with assorted single and multiple family units. There is a scattering of family- and youth-serving institutions in the immediate area.[3]

Like many other large public housing developments, Cabrini-Green experiences a high level of violence. One study found that by the age of five, virtually every child in the community had either seen a shooting or knew someone who had been involved in one.[4] The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) recently instituted a policy of "sweeping" the buildings for illegal substances and guns, and for individuals who are not on the unit's lease. Once secured, the buildings are equipped with metal detectors and security guards.

Chicago, the third largest city in the country, has extensive public housing programs. The Chicago Housing Authority recently estimated that 200,000 individuals reside in its 19 developments, 60,000 of whom are not listed as tenants on the leases. Another 60,000 are on the waiting lists.[5] Ninety-one percent of the CHA's tenants are African-American and 61 percent of the families rely on Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC).[6]

Origins and History

Project Match was launched in 1985 to work with people unlikely to succeed in the job market on their own. The effort combines: 1) provision of long-term assistance to welfare-dependent families as they move towards economic independence, and 2) documentation and dissemination of lessons learned about the process of leaving welfare and effective welfare-to-work strategies. Project Match was started by Toby Herr, a research associate at Northwestern University's Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research and a former elementary school teacher in Cabrini-Green for nine years; additional support came from the Winfield-Moody Health Center, where the project's primary service site is located. Herr saw that in other welfare-to-work programs, getting a job was considered the end of a process. Herr, however, suspected that it was just the beginning. She describes the initial stages of Project Match's development:

> "There was no master plan. We were not afraid to take risks and 'grope along' in order to try new things. We were people who got together and broke the rules."[7]

Project Match has since broadened its mission and scope of activities. The research component of the program, originally part of Northwestern University, is now affiliated with the Erikson Institute of Chicago. Kids Match, created in 1991, links children to a series of positive educational, cultural, and recreational activities through a family-centered approach to service coordination. The *Two-Generation Head Start Self-Sufficiency Demonstration Project*, also known as Step-Up, has also begun at a Head Start site in the Cabrini-Green development. Project Match has increasingly become involved in sharing the initiative's lessons with a broad audience through the media, research reports,

conference presentations, site visits and technical assistance. For example, Project Match's work has influenced the Post-Employment Services Demonstrations, a federally-funded jobs project in California, Illinois, Oregon and Texas. Project Match staff provide technical assistance to that project.[8]

Key Events

1985 Project Match begins; its research component is affiliated with Northwestern University.

1988 Project Match wins Innovations in State and Local Government Award from the Ford Foundation and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

1991 Kids Match is launched.

1992
- Project Match's research component affiliates with Erikson Institute of Chicago.
- The *Two-Generation Head Start Self-Sufficiency Demonstration Project* begins.

1993 Project Match findings influence federal Post-Employment Services Demonstration project.

Organization and Governance

Project Match is not a freestanding organization. Funding for services is channelled through the Winfield-Moody Health Center, while support for the Project's research flows through the Erikson Institute. The health center's board of directors provides general oversight to the program, allowing a high level of operational independence. No formal accountability either to participants or to a tenant organization is structured at the present time.

Project Match employs a unique integration of practice and research, and in many respects functions as a formative evaluation process. That is, its program and organization change as data suggest that adaptations are necessary. It is thus committed to policy research and dissemination so that its lessons can benefit a wider audience of program planners and policy makers. Project Match's goal is to learn what happens to people over time as they

try to make their way off of welfare, and to facilitate that journey. As a result of certain critical findings -- such as the early discovery that job retention was an overwhelming problem for most participants -- the Project has adapted its approach to address this problem. Project Match Director Toby Herr believes that the program has credibility because of the effort it has invested in the careful documentation of its participants' progress. Says Herr:

> "We have followed the data without having an investment in any particular conclusions. This has allowed us to be flexible in our approach."[9]

In addition to support from researchers and students, Project Match staff members include a project director (who is also a researcher), a director of services (who herself carries a large caseload), one part-time job developer, two placement specialists, a computer systems coordinator, a GED instructor, and an administrative and fiscal manager. At the Step-Up site there are five parent scheduling coordinators who receive stipends for their work. The research and service components are deliberately intertwined in the staffing configuration, with some staff members having dual responsibilities. There has been a good rate of retention for experienced staff.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

The Project Match model utilizes an individual empowerment approach. Participants do not play a formal oversight role within Project Match, but their feedback has helped to shape the program's evolution. Since Project Match relies on word-of-mouth as its primary recruitment technique, it is evident from the number of new recruits that its reputation for delivering effective support has spread through many informal networks throughout the community. The project does not have any formal relationship with the tenant organization at Cabrini-Green, although several participants are active as building captains.

Goals and Philosophy

Project Match's service goals are to help participants enroll in and complete education and training programs, obtain and keep jobs,

advance to better jobs and become quickly reemployed if a job is lost.

Project Match has shown that, for many, leaving welfare is a long and difficult process that involves false starts, setbacks, and incremental gains. There are several specific principles which have been developed to illustrate this complicated journey; these are built into a visual metaphor called the *Incremental Ladder to Self-Sufficiency:*

- People will take ***different pathways*** out of welfare dependency (e.g., move from school to work, work to school, volunteer work to paid work).

- There must be a ***continuum of activities*** to help a person step onto the ladder at a point that is not so high that he or she falls off but is high enough that he or she can grow.

- People should be ***recognized for achievement of incremental milestones*** (e.g., regularly attending GED classes, working 1-3 months, working 4-6 months).

- Many parents will need ***help to move from one career step to the next*** (e.g., help to move from Head Start volunteer work to paid employment).

- The ***length of time needed to get off welfare*** must be ***flexible***.

- It is important to embed the process of leaving welfare in an ***understanding that both reflects societal expectations and is sensitive to individual recipients' past experiences, abilities, and personal situations***.[10]

Project Match's conceptual framework challenges typical employment and training programs in two important ways: it broadens the array of activities viewed as legitimate steps toward self-sufficiency, and it gradually increases time commitments to encourage movement on a track toward self-sufficiency.

As a research and demonstration program, Project Match remains committed to trying new approaches to empowering low-income individuals. Project Match seeks to encourage others to

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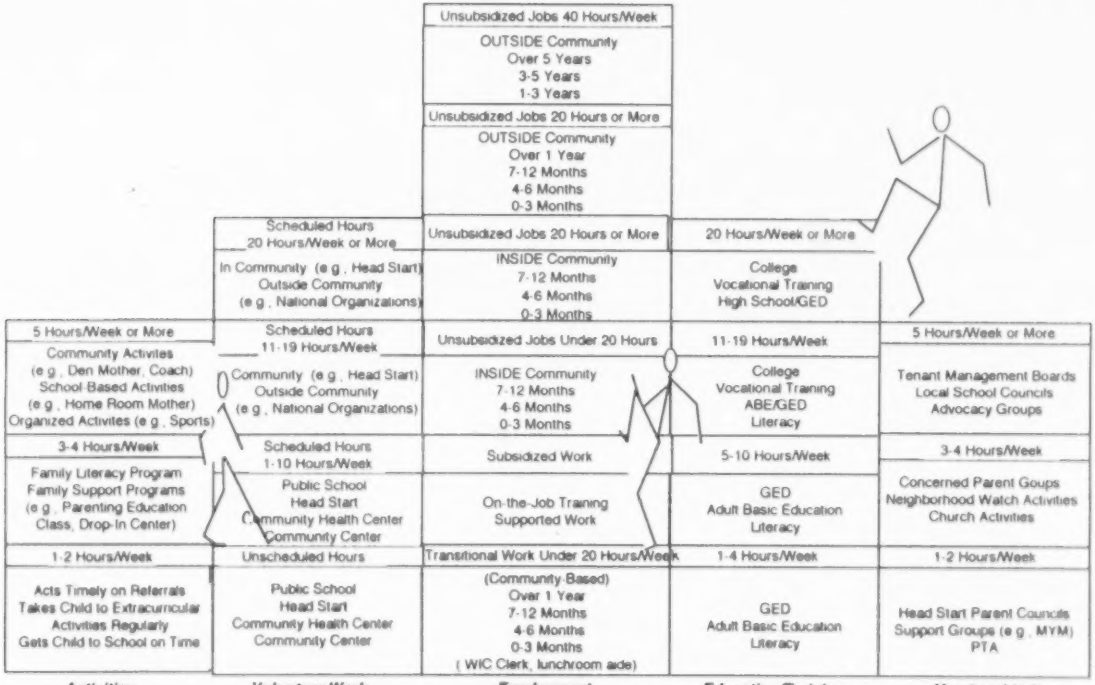
Incremental Ladder to Economic Independence



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experiment with its ideas and approaches, and, through developing alternative models, to play a role in the welfare policy debate.

Program

Since Project Match is primarily a welfare-to-work initiative, most of its efforts address the needs of its adult participants. It does, however, broker some services for children.

Parents: Project Match's work includes locating jobs for participants, and providing post-placement follow-up support to monitor progress after participants are placed in educational programs, employment, or volunteer positions. Project Match makes a commitment of long-term support (three to five years) to each individual. Among the key services provided are job development, job and school retention support, help with transitions, and recognition for attainment of incremental milestones. It has, however, discontinued informal support groups for participants due to low participation. Although primarily a service linkage effort, Project Match now provides its own GED classes.

To implement the ladder framework, Project Match:

- Establishes and maintains active, flexible, trusting relationships with participants for as long as three to five years.
- Allows staff to work with the full range of participants' concerns, and to work with other members of participants' families.
- Links participants to existing programs and services rather than establishing new ones; engages in extensive job development activities.
- Helps with transitions from one career step to another. Tracks participants' placements and status changes.
- Uses realistic, incremental milestones to conceptualize and measure participants' progress.
- Views assessment and goal-setting as ongoing processes.

- Recognizes participants' achievements through newsletters, parties, certificates and bulletin boards.[11]

The combination, sequence and length of time for each activity varies for each participant. For example, one person may hold three different jobs before entering a training program and then advancing to a better-paid position, while another may begin with a part-time volunteer position, attend GED classes until the GED exam is passed on a second attempt, start part-time work which eventually becomes full-time, and then work towards an AA degree at a community college.

To date, Project Match has worked with more than 750 residents of the Cabrini-Green community. The majority of participants are African-American (99%), female (77%) and unmarried. Sixty percent were age twenty-five or younger at the time of enrollment. Only 55 percent came into the program with work experience and 58 percent grew up in homes supported by welfare.

With the Chicago Department of Human Services, Project Match has begun the *Two-Generation Head Start Self-Sufficiency Demonstration Project*. "A relationship appears to exist between a person's capacity to move toward self-sufficiency and his/her capacity to fulfill parenting responsibilities," say Herr and Robert Halpern, the two authors of an Erikson Institute report on the program. "Many of the parents who find it difficult to get to work on time are the same ones having difficulty getting their children to school on time."[12]

Located in a Head Start program in Cabrini-Green, the goal of this two-generation effort is to test and develop a full progression of steps (with upper and lower rungs on the ladder) towards economic self-sufficiency within one human service program (which is representative of many other programs).

The project creates a ladder towards self-sufficiency for Head Start parents, based on Head Start's parent involvement component. This involves supporting those parents who are job-ready with services such as job development, retention and re-placement, and assistance with transitions (e.g., help in finding another job when one is lost or assistance in moving from a training program to paid employment). With a framework now in place, Project Match staff have put considerable effort into getting all parents onto the ladder, and making sure they move up.

Project Match participants.
(photo by Project Match staff)

For those parents who are not ready to begin the journey off of welfare with such demanding activities as school or work, Project Match has created a continuum of community volunteer and parenting experiences (e.g., volunteering at a child's Head Start program, becoming a scout leader) that will lead eventually to more conventional welfare-to-work activities.

Children: Started in 1991, Kids Match seeks to work with parents around their own needs, attend to children's developmental needs, and support parents in their role as enablers and advocates for the children.

The Kids Match services include:

- An assessment of strengths, resources and talents as well as problems.
- Identification of recreational, cultural, and educational services.
- Referral; enrollment, and follow-up support.
- Help with transitions such as starting a new school or ending a program.
- Recognition of important accomplishments."

The initial group of children in Kids Match ranged from two months old to seventeen years; the average age was six and all but seven children were under the age of nine. The Kids Match participants changed residences often, on the average of every other year. All of the families had a history of dependence on welfare, although a small number of mothers were working at the time of enrollment.

Funding

Core funding for Project Match's work has come from the Illinois Department of Public Aid. Several private foundations have

funded the research and Kids Match components, while the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Community Services, Demonstration Partnership Program has funded the Step-Up Project. The total service and research budget for Project Match is $589,000, of which $342,000 goes for personnel expenses. The cost of the program is approximately $1,400 per participant per year. Project Match has successfully blended categorical funding, government demonstration grants and private foundation support.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Project Match is unique among the organizations profiled because it was structured as a research and demonstration project from the outset. Through its initial affiliation with Northwestern University and now through the Erikson Institute, Project Match has maintained a consistently strong level of documentation and evaluation activity.

Project Match believes that staff members must know what stage their clients have reached in order to provide case management services and to follow clients over a lengthy period of time as they move through multiple career stages. To do this, it has a computerized tracking system which generates service-oriented printouts that aid in providing comprehensive employment assistance services. The system tracks monthly placement information on each participant (e.g., whether a person is working or in training) as well as status changes related to each placement (e.g., whether a person receives a pay increase or graduates from or drops out of a training program). The system also provides accountability by preserving essential data to monitor who is served and what each person does each month.[14]

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

Project Match faces three major challenges: funding, balancing local and national commitments, and creating organizational change in dominant institutions. First, funding determines the client base of Project Match. Since the Project relies on funds from the Department of Public Aid, it is only able to work with women who receive AFDC. As a result, few men have been able to participate in the program. Second, while an increasingly visible role in the national welfare reform debate has meant

increased prominence for Project Match's approach, it has also placed additional pressure on the program's day-to-day operations. Given the Project's commitment to deepen and improve its efforts in its current sites, it has tended to be cautious about major external commitments. Third, creating organizational change in prevailing institutions (Head Start, public welfare bureaucracies) to sustain deep-rooted change requires a shift in organizations' internal cultures. Project Match seeks to foster these internal cultural changes to support the new approaches and relationships which it advocates.

Reflections

Toby Herr, Project Director:
"We try an approach and observe it closely. If it's not working, we'll modify or discard it. If it is working, we'll build on it. The first major lesson we learned was that people were losing their jobs so we created a job retention component and at the same time obtained funding to systematically study job turnover. Another example: when we observed that people were GED-hopping, moving from one GED program to the next, we started an on-site GED program so we could develop strategies for keeping people attached."

Joyce Crawford Bailey, Project Match participant:
"I've been involved with Project Match since 1987 when I saw a sign up at the health center I go to. Project Match staff helped me define what I needed to do to get a job. I got my GED, on the third try, and went to work with an infant mortality program. Then I went back to Harold Washington College part-time to get my AA degree and now I'm working on my BA at Northwestern University. I'm working in the Parents Too Soon program at Mt. Sinai Hospital.

"Project Match staff have been behind me all the way; they've kept me going. My family thought I was nuts to keep going with school, so I turned to Project Match for help in figuring out summer and afterschool programs for my kids. I come from a dependent system, with food stamps, medical benefits and welfare. Project Match's counseling helped me get a view of how to become self-sufficient and independent. With all the changes

coming along in the welfare system, people won't know what to do; that's why we need lots more programs like Project Match."

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THE COMMONWEALTH TENANTS ASSOCIATION

Location:
Boston, Massachusetts

Program Operator:
Commonwealth Tenants Association (public housing resident group)

Year Program Began:
1969

Type of Program:
Public housing tenant/community-wide

Program Components:
Community organization, physical revitalization, family services, service linkage, community gardens, early childhood and afterschool tutoring/mentoring programs, ESL classes, senior activities

Total Annual Budget:
$92,000

Primary Funding Sources:
Boston Housing Authority, Community Development Block Grant Program, The Boston Foundation, revenue from on-site laundromat

Points of Distinction:
- Tenant organizing has transformed Commonwealth from a distressed development into a model community.
- Strong collaborative relations with local community, service providers, and a private college.

Population Served:
40% white; 38% African-American; 14% Latino; 8% Asian

Introduction

The Commonwealth Tenants Association (CTA) demonstrates the successes that strong resident participation can achieve, including major physical renovations and family service creation. Through tenant organizing and collaboration with the surrounding Allston-Brighton neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts, the Commonwealth development has been transformed from a severely distressed development to a model community. Family support services including early childhood and afterschool tutoring/mentoring programs, an adolescent girls' group, community gardening and food distribution initiatives, and ESL classes operate from attractive community space created during the redevelopment process. Ten years after completion of the revitalization effort, the development remains vibrant and well-maintained and a strong family support program has endured; this is due in large measure to the efforts of the CTA. As other public housing communities plan for physical redevelopment, the Commonwealth experience argues for the importance of community organizing and family support services.[1]

Community Context

Historically, Boston neighborhoods have been divided along ethnic and racial lines. Allston-Brighton was primarily home to Irish Catholic families, but recent demographics reflect growing diversity. According to 1990 census data, 18.7 percent of Boston's 117,656 families (including families without children and with elderly dependents) live below the poverty line. Forty-four percent of all families headed by single mothers live under the poverty line, and 28 percent of all children under the age of eighteen live in low-income families. Boston houses approximately 10 percent of its population in public housing, one of the highest figures for a U.S. city.[2]

Commonwealth is a 477-unit development overseen by the Boston Housing Authority (BHA). Located in a relatively stable mixed-income neighborhood, it is comprised of five six-story mid-rises and six three-story row houses as well as two buildings designated for community facilities. There are 274 family apartments and 200 units reserved for the elderly and handicapped. Of the 1,400 residents, 38 percent are African-

American, 40 percent are white (including Russian-speaking elderly), 14 percent are Latino, and 8 percent are Asian.

Origins and History

Commonwealth, originally named Fidelis Way, was built in 1950 as subsidized housing for veterans and consisted of 648 units in thirteen buildings. As veterans were able to move on to home ownership, the resident population gradually included more minority and female-headed families who lacked the resources to make the stay at Fidelis Way a temporary one. Internal problems and corruption in the BHA led to decreasing services and poor management. Fidelis Way rapidly deteriorated into one of the most distressed housing developments in the state. By the late 1970s, over half of the units were uninhabitable due to rodent and insect infestation, inadequate sewage disposal and heating problems. Hallways were littered with refuse and, as one resident recalls, "were like hell, with holes in the walls."[3] Residents complained that mushrooms grew on the walls, boilers blew up, and rain water dripped down to the first floor. Crime was so prevalent that young children were not allowed onto the streets and families hid behind boarded windows. Security was non-existent, and vacancy rates soared over 50 percent by 1980.

By 1969, residents began mobilizing their neighbors to combat the deterioration. They established the Commonwealth Tenants Association and initiated outreach to the broader community to obtain needed services for residents. In 1975, public housing tenants from across the city successfully brought a class action suit against the BHA. The court ordered the Boston Housing Authority into receivership in 1980 and appointed Lewis "Harry" Spence to oversee the agency. In an effort to show the viability of public housing, Spence concentrated resources of the Housing Authority on a few of the most distressed developments. The Boston Housing Authority selected Fidelis Way because it had an active and racially diverse tenant's association; the CTA had successfully generated public support within the Allston-Brighton community and had organized protests which focused attention on the conditions at Fidelis Way. The development was situated in a stable residential neighborhood with low unemployment, and was believed to have a high redevelopment potential.[4] Finally, Fidelis

Way had been studied for redevelopment feasibility, and several proposals were prepared for review.

A combined total of $26.2 million in federal and state funds were allocated to begin major redevelopment at Commonwealth, and John M. Corcoran & Company was selected as the developer. The CTA, community members, and Boston Housing Authority staff members formed a Task Force to plan the renovation. Its goals included major redesign of interior space, rehabilitation of community facilities, improved property management, and provision of services for resident needs. Tenants were active in design and relocation decisions and some obtained construction jobs. Throughout the project, CTA leaders maintained contact with off-site residents in order to dispel the widespread fear that the development would be sold to private developers.

The renovation was carefully planned to be responsive to families, the elderly, and the handicapped. Unit dimensions were expanded to decrease density, and the number of bedrooms in units was redistributed to fit changing demographics. The number of common entryways and elevator-accessed units were greatly reduced, and outdoor and common areas were designed to maximize safety and security. Two of the mid-rise buildings were demolished to create daycare, community, and management facilities. In 1983, the Corcoran Management Company was selected to undertake all management responsibilities for Commonwealth.

Some development funds were allocated to "soft costs," including support services.[5] Along with several collaborative programs, the Commonwealth Tenants Association sponsored an innovative home daycare system. Unemployed female residents were recruited as caretakers, and the CTA provided a support and backup system for the women. The CTA also operated a mediation program that efficiently resolved local communication problems. The CTA is seeking new funding for these programs, which have been discontinued due to state cutbacks.

Commonwealth is today a well-maintained complex: Flowers bloom and children play in common areas. Leaders of the CTA cite the high level of commitment and involvement by residents as one of the main factors in Commonwealth's success. Harry Spence, reflecting on the success of the revitalization, states, "It's a place where it says to you, poor communities can work."[6] The program's precedent of including tenants in the redevelopment

process has influenced other construction projects. The CTA often meets with other tenant organizations and housing officials eager to replicate its success.[7] Although challenges remain, CTA leaders believe that with continued resident participation, Commonwealth will remain a model housing development.

Key Events

1950 Fidelis Way (Commonwealth) constructed.

1969 CTA established.

1975 Suit filed by public housing tenants against the BHA for mismanagement.

1978 CHIP created.

1979
- Planning for revitalization begins.
- Vacancy rate: 42 percent.

1980
- Massachusetts Superior Court appoints Lewis Spence as Receiver.
- BHA applies for, and receives funding for redevelopment program.
- Vacancy rate: 52 percent.

1981 John M. Corcoran & Company is selected as developer.

1982 Construction begins.

1983
- State provides additional funding to cover "soft" costs of redevelopment.
- Corcoran Management Company is selected as private manager.

1985
- All construction is completed and buildings are reoccupied.
- Several family services are launched.

1990 Severe funding cuts occur.

1994 10th Anniversary of the redevelopment of Commonwealth is celebrated.

Organization and Governance

The CTA is a membership organization open to all adult Commonwealth residents and governed by a sixteen-member board of directors. It is primarily responsible for providing and coordinating services for residents, as well as obtaining resources for the Commonwealth development. Through tenant participation, the organization aims to empower residents and improve their integration into the community. It also acts as a mediator between tenants and management on lease issues other than rent collection.

The board meets monthly and the full association holds an annual membership meeting. The multiracial board represents the tenants and maintains contact with residents through door-to-door outreach. The board is generally representative of the diversity within the development: It consists of ten African Americans, four whites, one Latina, and one Asian.

The CTA is staffed by an executive director, an educational coordinator, a resource coordinator, and part-time administrative support. Students from Boston College and other volunteers provide resources for the afterschool tutoring/mentoring program.

The Corcoran Management Company collaborates with the CTA and the Boston Housing Authority to provide full management services to residents. New managers are trained to collaborate with tenants, and the management provides an orientation program for new residents. The use of private management has been enormously effective for daily upkeep and maintenance, thus freeing the CTA to focus on community and family services.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

The history of tenant organization at Commonwealth has resulted in program offerings which are closely linked to a broader agenda of community development. The CTA continues to play an active role in monitoring existing services, with ongoing feedback from parents and other residents. Periodically, it conducts door-to-door needs assessments, which provide information about emerging

community issues. In addition, strong emphasis has been placed on outreach to, and inclusion of, the diverse racial and ethnic groupings at Commonwealth.

Goals and Philosophy

The CTA is dedicated to building a strong community and decent living conditions. Its main goal is to build systems that allow the community to work together. Resource Coordinator David Shimkus states:

> "To be successful, you need to go beyond the physical environment; you need to provide services where people feel comfortable asking for advice. [You must] support the community and keep people working together and constantly work to include more and more people...[and help them] take ownership in their community and get reinvolved in it."[8]

The CTA lives out its philosophy by providing advocacy for tenants and identifying new needs as the community evolves. The CTA seeks to promote leadership skills and enhance a sense of belonging through tenant participation in its programs.

Other CTA goals include:

- Developing plans for stable funding.
- Increasing interaction and collaboration with the Allston-Brighton community.
- Increasing diversity awareness.
- Promoting family and elder interaction.
- Minimizing duplication of on- and off-site services.

The Commonwealth Child Care Center
(photo by Gayle Epp)

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Program

Although most services are provided through collaboration with other agencies, the CTA is solely responsible for the educational component. Its offices are located in the development's Community Building, along with several programs as well as a Community Room and other resident facilities.

Community: The CTA assists tenants with obtaining welfare, immigration services, education, and employment. It seeks to increase access to benefit programs and a variety of services, usually by providing referrals to outside agencies. These linkages to outside agencies strengthen tenants' ties to the community. Similarly, three on-site community gardens, open to all residents for use, are a vital component of the organization's efforts to increase inter-generational interaction and community membership.

SHARE, a community-based food distribution program that provides tenants with groceries at a low cost in return for two hours of community service per month, has also been instrumental in promoting community cohesion. Finally, weekly ESL classes work to reduce language barriers among community members.

Children and Youth: Infant, toddler, and preschool daycare is provided on site by Action for Boston Community Development. Afterschool Tutoring/Mentor Companion programs provide tutoring and educational programs for sixty students. The PULSE program, which matches Boston College students with children on a one-on-one basis, is conducted at the children's homes. The tutoring program is staffed by volunteers who hold open hours twice a week in the Community Center. An all girls' group which promotes self-esteem and educational attainment meets twice weekly on site.

Collaboration

The Boston Housing Authority employs a part-time youth services worker to organize youth activities at Commonwealth. Healthy Boston of Allston-Brighton, a collaborative effort, provides programs through several agencies, including the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club. Programs include ESL groups, newcomer

assistance, social and cultural events, and job fairs. Boston College provides volunteer student tutors for the PULSE Program. It also hosts an annual Christmas party for children. The First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Waltham provides ESL classes for residents. CTA participates actively in Allston/Brighton Against Drugs -- a coalition of community groups, local businesses, and public housing tenants that meets monthly to address drug abuse, particularly among teens. The Faneuil Housing Development collaborates and shares some services with the CTA. The Jackson-Mann Community School operates the Girls Center.

Funding

Total costs for the redevelopment were $31,566,275, provided by federal and state grants. The CTA's operating expenses for fiscal year 1994, $92,000, came from city and private funds, as well as revenue from an on-site laundromat. Funding has fluctuated over the years, and although several programs have been cut, the CTA has continued to operate.

After 1990 state budget cuts resulted in staff reduction and the elimination of the family daycare network, the CTA successfully struggled to restore core staff positions. The association is currently diversifying its financial support from a few state and city agencies and foundations.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Tenant surveys serve as a primary form of program monitoring. Surveys conducted before and after the redevelopment show a substantial increase in resident satisfaction and perception of safety and living standards. A 1979 survey reported that only 11 percent of tenants felt "very safe" at Fidelis Way. By contrast, a 1993 survey showed that 95 percent felt "moderately" to "very" safe. Likewise, the percentage of respondents who felt that Commonwealth was a good place to raise children increased from a mere 19 percent in 1979 to 78 percent in 1993.[9] Many sources credit the unity of the tenant organization and its ability to move beyond individual differences as key to maintaining the high quality of community life.

Indeed, because residents were crucial to the renovation process, the CTA has been able to preserve a high level of tenant

involvement. There is little willful destruction of property, and the community works together to sustain the quality of life of the development. Rent collection has increased to an impressive 95 percent, indicative of the pride that the residents have in their community. The CTA has been hailed as one of the "most successful privately managed redevelopments" and has received awards for excellence from the Urban Land Institute and the Boston Society of Architects.[10]

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

Despite the success which has been achieved, challenges remain for the Commonwealth community. The problems found in other low-income communities -- including poverty, violence, school drop-out rates, and substance abuse -- still exist. Although the cooperation of the tenants keeps the number of crimes low relative to other public housing developments, in 1993, police still responded to an average of more than one call a day from Commonwealth. Ironically, due to the relatively low crime rate in Commonwealth, Boston police have decreased security there to focus on other areas. As one tenant notes: "It's a problem, and we're worried about it. Right now...we're doing good on our own, but they still owe us to give us police protection."[11] In addition to needing increased police protection, there also is a need for jobs and support for teens to keep them off the streets and to teach them that they are somebody.

Demographic changes, too, present challenges to community cohesion. In particular, the organization would like to improve access for Asian tenants, who are the fastest growing population in the development. The CTA is responding to this challenge by increasing its outreach and recruitment work.

Better programming for single mothers is also a goal. The CTA believes that a focus on parenting skills, especially on parent/child communication, would address some of the issues identified through the child care and youth program components.

Reflections

Rosetta Robinson, member of the CTA Board of Directors:
"We are a role model for public housing. We have proven that. The tenants here have been able to prove that we have set an

example to all developments across the world that public housing can work. But the tenants have to make it work.

"People need to put pride in where they live...you don't sit because your neighbors sit...you don't wait till maintenance comes to do it, you do it yourself, because this is where *you* live. And this is the way we feel about it, and this is the way we do things. Don't wait for no one, if you do it, do it on your own, someone's always gonna follow you. A project is what you make it to be."

Krystle Ann Naughton, age 8, resident:
"We help each other do things. It's nice to help people learn or learn how to speak another language. I'm glad we live together at Commonwealth or I wouldn't know [my neighbor]."

Chicago Holman, age 11, resident:
"What I like about Commonwealth is that I feel safe and I have opportunities."

Bart McDonough, Executive Director, CTA:
"Commonwealth is public housing that works, and the reason it works is the control the tenants have over their lives. The only way that they're going to be able to make any real difference is if they speak up. People have rights to certain things and one of those is safe, sanitary, and decent housing. You need to be able to work together to get that, especially in low-income housing."

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THE WELCOME PROJECT

Location:
Somerville, Massachusetts

Program Operator:
The Welcome Project (community-based non-profit organization)

Year Program Began:
1987

Type of Program:
Public housing tenant/community-wide with focus on diversity

Key Program Components:
Women's groups (Haitian, Vietnamese, Latina), ESL classes, multicultural programming (community garden, arts projects), advocacy, and service linkage

Total Annual Budget:
$138,000

Primary Funding Sources:
Foundation and private, with Community Development Block Grant and Somerville Housing Authority support. Original funding from Gateway Cities Grant

Points of Distinction:
- Evolved from provider initiative to tenant-driven effort.
- Maintains strong collaborative links.
- Works to empower refugee and immigrant newcomer communities.
- Emphasizes cultural programming as a means of community-building.

Population Served:
38% ethnic white; 37% Haitian; 16% Latino; 8% S.E. Asian; 1% other

Introduction

The Welcome Project is an innovative program that organizes a public housing immigrant community through ethnic support groups and multicultural activities. After a period of rapid demographic change caused tensions between long-time white residents and newcomers, The Welcome Project was established to help alleviate these racial conflicts and to build a multicultural community. The Welcome Project supports minority families by diminishing isolation and strengthens the community by introducing residents to diversity and the experiences of immigrants.[1]

Community Context

The Welcome Project is located in the Mystic Housing Development in Somerville, Massachusetts, which is managed by the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA). Built in 1950, the Mystic development is divided into state-funded and federally-funded sections and consists of 452 units in nineteen buildings. All 214 units on the federal side were renovated in 1992, and the hallways on the state side were redone in the fall of 1994 to remove lead paint. There are still serious problems with bathroom repair and hallway conditions on the state side.

Somerville is home to a large student population and low- to moderate-income families. Eleven and one-half percent of the population live below the poverty line.[2] Minorities comprise 15 percent of the population and non-English speaking residents increased from 4 percent in 1980 to 22 percent in 1990.[3]

The majority of Mystic households, all of which are low-income, are headed by single women, although percentages vary widely by ethnic group. The monthly median income of residents is approximately $687. Haitians comprise 37 percent of Mystic's population, Latinos 16 percent, South East Asians 8 percent, ethnic whites 38 percent, and other 1 percent.[4]

Origins and History

Since the arrival of Irish and Italian newcomers in the late 19th century, Somerville has attracted immigrants and refugees. In the 1980s, at least 10,000 new immigrants moved into the city; this rapid demographic transformation brought a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment. Although in 1987 Somerville declared itself a

"sanctuary city" -- allowing all residents access to city services regardless of legal status -- five years later partial repeal of the measure was successful. This sent a powerful political message about the community's openness to newcomers. As in other cities with rapidly changing demographics, there have been incidents of racial violence in schools, racist and anti-immigrant campaigns, and racially-motivated stabbings.

Mystic was originally an all-white development, but due to a state mandate for affirmative action in Massachusetts public housing, the minority population jumped from 2 percent in the mid-1980s to 60 percent in 1994.[5] In the mid-1980s, racial tensions between the white residents and immigrant newcomers erupted in beatings, fights, and vicious name-calling. Broken windows and racial graffiti marred the buildings, and garbage was thrown into newcomers' homes. Since most immigrants were refugees who fled oppressive governments, they were not accustomed to seeing police as their protectors and did not ask for assistance. Rather, many responded to the harassment by isolating themselves and avoiding contact with neighbors. Language and cultural differences further aggravated the situation. The SHA downplayed the extent of the problems and turned a blind eye to the racially charged situation at Mystic.

In 1986, the Mystic Providers Group -- a group of tenants, service providers, and city agencies -- identified a large number of minorities who were not receiving services and talked with SHA officials about their harassment complaints. A year later, a state grant to increase services for newcomers allowed The Welcome Project to be established. An advisory board from the Mystic Providers Group, which later evolved into the project's board of directors, acted as consultants to the new program. Its goals were to build a strong, united multicultural community, as well as to develop a voice for low-income people. Over time, The Welcome Project engaged in extensive door-to-door outreach, provided translated pamphlets, and arranged multiracial get-togethers for residents.

Still, the community has had to combat ethnic and racial tensions. For example, in 1987, with support from the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, a class action suit was filed by Cambodian tenants against the SHA for not protecting immigrant families from racial harassment. In a landmark ruling two years later, the court held the Somerville Housing Authority

directly responsible for failing to intervene against the harassment, and instituted an agreement which established specific complaint and reporting procedures for the SHA. Simultaneously, the Housing Authority cracked down on the crime and harassment at Mystic, and some white families moved out or were evicted. Around the same time, the federal side was shut down to undergo extensive renovations, thus cutting the remaining population in half. Following these events, racial harassment and drug-related crime subsided substantially.

In 1990, The Welcome Project incorporated, more residents joined the board, and the position of a full-time executive director was created. During that time, several innovative art projects were linked to the community. One of the first was the Mystic Mural Project, in which a multicultural group of 200 students designed and painted the boards that covered many windows of the closed federal buildings. An oral history project, *All The Bricks Look Alike...*, in which bicultural teens interviewed immigrant adults about the concept of community in their native countries and at Mystic, was also created, as was a community garden started by The Welcome Project. In collaboration with the Vietnamese Women's Group and the Community Action Agency of Somerville, this garden tripled in size.

The Welcome Project collaborated with the Elizabeth Peabody House to start a support group for Vietnamese women and soon after, a group for Haitian women was also formed. Safety, childcare, and information about services were the prime concerns for most women, and these support groups became forums to share experiences and survival strategies. With support from other groups in the Somerville community, the women's groups organized tenants to systematically respond to racial incidents. As the numbers and degree of organization of newcomer women grew, their visibility within the community was strengthened. This early work paved the way for cross-cultural organizing. Ties between the women's groups expanded, and more community-oriented activities were planned. Assisted by interpreters and staff, communication between the SHA and the residents increased, thus quickening the response of the authorities to racial harassment. The Welcome Project also started on-site ESL classes to address the demand for language skills.

With the reopening of the federal side in 1992, project staff capacity was increased to expand and strengthen the existing

programs. The door of the new Welcome Project office was painted an inviting lavender, and through continual door-to-door outreach, tenant participation in the program increased. In 1993, The Welcome Project involved several local corporations and organizations in constructing a modern play area. A well-publicized photo documentary depicted children "playing in dumpsters, old mattresses and stairwells for lack of a better place."[6] Mystic children were consulted for design and color choices, and tenants participated in the construction.

As the success of the women's groups and the completion of the playground have increased tenant participation, The Welcome Project -- currently in its seventh year -- is seeking to expand its services. Many tenants cite The Welcome Project as a key factor in diminishing isolation for newcomers and "welcoming" them into the community.

Key Events

1987
- The Welcome Project is created under the auspices of the Mystic Providers Group.
- Somerville declares itself a "Sanctuary City."

1989
- Vietnamese Women's Group starts.
- Federal side of development closed.
- Mystic Mural Project completed.

1990
- The Welcome Project incorporated.
- Latina Women's Group starts.

1991
- Haitian Women's Group started.
- *All the Bricks Look Alike...* oral history exhibit opens in community.
- ESL classes begin.

1992
- SHA provides an apartment to the Welcome Project.
- "Sanctuary City" resolution is repealed.
- Federal side of development reopens; minority population increases sharply.
- Haitian Teen Group is created.

1993 Playground is constructed.

1994 First Night (New Year's festival) banners and women's healing quilt are created.

Organization and Governance

As a non-profit organization, The Welcome Project is overseen by its own board of directors. It is staffed by an executive director and program director as well as a part-time ESL teacher, and part-time Latina and Haitian program coordinators. In addition to programming and service coordination, staff members manage fundraising, grant writing, and networking with Somerville and nearby city agencies. More than half of the nine-member board of directors are Mystic residents. More informal participatory planning processes are utilized within the program components to encourage a resident-driven agenda.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

Through the ongoing work of The Welcome Project, the formation of a more inclusive Mystic community has been nourished. Its door-to-door outreach activities and multicultural programming have united people of different ethnicities while fostering community pride. Participation has increased as tenants have begun to trust the program. The construction of the playground in particular has boosted the residents' confidence in The Welcome Project. Begun as a provider-sponsored organization, The Welcome Project is now a community-based, community-directed organization. By demonstrating how a multicultural community can work together, the effort ensures that immigrants have a voice.

Goals and Philosophy

The Welcome Project is dedicated to serving immigrant minorities and believes that a diverse community can be a dynamic place for cultural exchange rather than a breeding ground for trouble. The Welcome Project focuses on increasing interaction among residents to diminish isolation, as well as on encouraging pride in culture and diversity. Its main goal is to tie minority newcomers to the community and to give them information and skills that will allow them to integrate within the larger neighborhood. It also

works to introduce long-term (often white) residents to diversity issues. It approaches these goals through three means:

- Women's groups aimed at connecting and unifying residents as well as providing information and instruction in an accessible, translated fashion.
- Organizing cross-culturally on issues affecting all low-income people.
- Advocacy of resident concerns to SHA, welfare agencies, and other service providers.

Programs

All services provided by The Welcome Project are on-site. The Welcome Project actively recruits members through door-to-door and telephone outreach. Most programs are geared toward immigrant families and focus on integration through multicultural events and activities.

Adults: ESL classes started as a response to the need for basic language skills; many of the students are not literate in their native language and have never been to school. The Welcome Project offers beginning and intermediate levels of ESL classes and coordinates these with on-site babysitting. Recently, The Welcome Project added a women-only conversation group to encourage speaking practice among women who may be reticent to speak in the regular class.

For adult women, the women's groups are arguably the central component of The Welcome Project. The groups provide a sense of belonging and a vehicle for outreach to the greater community. By building self-esteem and self-worth, the groups give women the capacity to take control of their lives and become strong community leaders who participate in other events. They organize around issues affecting all residents, such as welfare and racism, and extend discussion into other areas as concerns arise. Each group meets twice a month, and all convene quarterly to arrange multicultural

Residents at the First Night Celebration in December, 1993 (photo by Welcome Project staff)

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activities. The Welcome Project is currently organizing a women's group for English-speaking tenants as well as a support group for young mothers.

The Haitian Women's Group works to diminish isolation by hosting speakers and engaging in problem-solving sessions to address community issues. In the past, the group has talked to officials from welfare agencies, high schools, and legal agencies. Translation is provided to improve accessibility, and members work on English skills and self-esteem. The group also discusses immigration issues, the political turmoil in Haiti, and the challenge of parenting in a cross-cultural environment. Several activities are planned each month; the group recently visited the Boston Aquarium, cooked Haitian food for other groups, and formed a sewing class. The group leader assists members with translation and advocacy, and informs participants on citizenship rights and Medicaid.

The Latina Women's Group, led by the Latina programs' coordinator, a former participant, meets twice monthly to discuss issues affecting all members. Members choose and plan group activities, such as learning crafts or holding information sessions with city officials.

The Vietnamese Women's Group has been very active in the creation of the community garden, which is cultivated by residents on land that was once abandoned. It has attracted a diverse following. The Vietnamese Women's Group also discusses cultural differences, problem solving, and life skills. It plans activities such as apple picking, gardening, and museum and beach visits. Its annual Tet (Vietnamese New Year) party is a popular event for the entire community.

With the Elizabeth Peabody House, The Welcome Project participates in **SHARE New England**, through which residents receive discounted groceries in exchange for community service. The Welcome Project provides advocacy in over 200 cases annually with the SHA, daycare, and welfare agencies; and provides referrals for services not sponsored by The Welcome Project. It also has an on-site voter registration program.

The Welcome Project created a women's healing quilt with the participation of a Somerville artist and local women's groups. Multicultural pot-luck suppers hosted by the women's groups resulted in plans for an ethnic cook book. In 1994, The Welcome Project participated in an annual New Year's festival held on the Boston Common. Banners created by tenants depicting traditional New Year's celebrations in five cultures were prominently displayed. All these ethnically-based efforts build links across barriers of race and culture.

Teens: The Haitian Teen Group focuses on the issues these teenagers face. During group meetings, conducted in English and Kreyol, members may discuss issues such as AIDS awareness, date rape, substance abuse, college choices, the situation in Haiti, their bicultural experience, and the culture gap between parents and teens. The group is a source of support for teens, especially those who have encountered an anti-Haitian backlash in their high schools. Group activities have included a furniture art project, field trips, and creation of a banner for a New Year's festival.

Community: The Welcome Project provides public and non-profit agencies with training on diversity, and stresses the importance of accessibility of services through translation and diversity education. Along with the Somerville Coalition for Racial and Ethnic Justice, The Welcome Project acts as a voice for immigrant issues and rights, and constantly works to make other agencies user-friendly toward non-English speaking newcomers. Several service providers are learning Kreyol through classes offered by the Welcome Project.

Collaboration

The Welcome Project collaborates with many public and non-profit agencies in Somerville. The Somerville Housing Authority provides an apartment to The Welcome Project for its program and administrative needs. The Elizabeth Peabody House works with The Welcome Project to assist Mystic residents by providing daycare for infants, toddlers and preschoolers; a daycare teacher certification program; and assistance in the Umbrella Project/Step Up for teens. This program offers activities for children's

education and entertainment, a Teen Action Group, and a Youth Basketball Program. Summer camp is also provided through collaboration with Elizabeth Peabody House. Additional youth services are provided by collaborations with the Mystic Learning Center, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Community Action Agency/Somerville Community Partnership.

The Somerville Mental Health Clinic operates a satellite on-site clinic to provide family and child counseling. It sponsors the Neighborhood Support System for Infants, which supplies bilingual, bicultural outreach workers who provide non-clinical support for families of infants who have been identified -- primarily by family health providers -- as "at risk" for emotional and behavioral problems. Non-clinical support is also provided to families at Mystic who are "at risk" of being overwhelmed by problems, regardless of whether they have infants. Somerville Hospital provides an on-site health clinic staffed with health professionals and with Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program workers to provide health care and health education to Mystic residents. The Community Action Agency of Somerville runs the on-site Head Start program, and Project Soup operates a food pantry housed in a church close to the Mystic development.

Funding

The budget for fiscal year 1994 was $137,900.[7] Funding is provided primarily by foundations, along with some federal and private support. Initial funding for the creation of The Welcome Project was from a Gateway Cities Grant. Volunteers from City Year, an urban service corps, helped to build the playground, clean hallways, and expand the community garden. Design and financial support for construction of the playground came from City Year, Bank of Boston, and Learning Structure, as well as other private donations.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Currently there is no third-party evaluation of The Welcome Project. Still, SHA Executive Director William Casamento credits The Welcome Project with significantly reducing racial tension within the development.[8] Indeed, it won the 1993 "Good Neighbor" award from Somerville Community Partnership. Former Executive Director of The Welcome Project Megan

McCaffrey has also been honored for making a difference through her work at the Welcome Project; she received an award from the anti-bias organization, Facing History and Ourselves.

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

The Welcome Project has made excellent progress on developing stronger ties between various newcomer groups in the community. Now it faces four significant challenges: expanding services, improving residents' safety, strengthening relationships with ethnic whites, and expanding the program to nearby housing developments. Along with more support groups, it would like to incorporate even more multicultural activities and renovate its office/meeting space.

Reflections

Lourdes Oses, Latina resident:

"If you need help, they're there to listen to you. It makes you feel like not everyone is out to get me. There are people that you can trust within the projects. The name, it's the "Welcome" Project...it says welcome [to] you, welcome all your problems, and we'll help you if we can."

Megan McCaffrey, Former Executive Director:

"Since 1987, we've really developed a model to approaching a community facing integration. We know how to support a community in determining what its needs are and how to address them. The strength of our work is that we've really been able to become a part of the community.

"Certainly those 30 kids who sat in the room and somebody said, 'We're going to build you a playground. What would you like it to be?' And then it came about. That's touched their lives. It's given them a feeling which I think is absent often in public housing neighborhoods that if you set out to do something, if you believe is something, it can happen; there's no big policy that everything is going to be a disappointment."

Maude Laroche, Haitian Programs coordinator:
"I think that [the members of the women's groups are] more relaxed about doing things themselves because at The Welcome Project we let them know that you don't have to be afraid to talk, to try to talk. I'm proud of the ESL classes. I think this is a great opportunity.

"I would like to say we are doing good things at The Welcome Project, and if [other agencies and developments] can have an agency like The Welcome Project, we can help people organize themselves and do things."

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THE RAINIER VISTA FAMILY CENTER

Location:
Seattle, Washington

Program Operator:
Neighborhood House (citywide, nonprofit organization)

Year Program Began:
1993

Type of Program:
Public housing tenant/community-wide with focus on diversity

Key Program Components:
Multiple women's support groups (by nationality, for victims of violence, and of mixed age and ethnicities); cultural events, and linkages to neighborhood resources

Total Annual Budget:
$47,000

Primary Funding Source:
Seattle Families and Education Levy

Points of Distinction:
- Strong multiracial Leadership Team.
- Programs affirm value of diversity.
- Active women's support groups.

Population Served:
30% Vietnamese; 26.2% African-American; 14.6% white; 10% Cambodian; 10% East African; 8.8% other

Introduction

With the recent influx of immigrants and refugees to urban centers from coast to coast, many public housing communities have seen their populations become increasingly multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural. Some residents speak English; many do not. Such internal diversity, coupled with the scarce resources of a low-income environment, can lead to tension along ethnic and racial lines.

By sponsoring cultural celebrations and providing a variety of minority support groups, the Rainier Vista Family Center (RVFC) emphasizes the positive aspects of diversity -- the richness that different cultures can contribute to their communities -- instead of viewing it as problematic. The program operates on the principle that by better understanding the cultural backgrounds of their neighbors, residents will find their community a more welcoming and safe place to live. Key to its success is the multiracial Leadership Team, a group that develops resident leaders who advocate for their respective ethnic groups and cooperate on issues of common concern.[1]

Community Context

The Rainier Vista public housing development includes 488 units located in the southeast section of Seattle, Washington. The City of Seattle, despite its affluence as home base for Microsoft Corp. and the Boeing Co., shelters over 20,000 people in public housing, approximately 8,000 of whom are children; over 5,000 of these families receive public assistance as their principal source of income.[2]

Opened in 1942, the Rainier Vista development today is comprised of a series of low-rise units, split by a major city artery. Sixty-eight percent of the households are headed by single parents, of which 82 percent are women. The median annual income for the households is $6,349.

Rainier Vista is a highly diverse community with significant numbers of refugees and recent immigrants: Vietnamese residents comprise 30 percent of the population, African-Americans 26.2 percent, whites 14.6 percent, Cambodians 10 percent, East Africans 10 percent, and other (Samoans, Native Americans, Latinos, Laotians, and Eastern Europeans) 8.8 percent.[3]

Origins and History

Located in a small, two-bedroom unit in the center of the Rainier Vista public housing community, the Rainier Vista Family Center was formally established in 1993. Prior to its inception, the concerns of Rainier Vista residents were addressed by the Rainier Vista Community Council, a resident-run body founded in 1971. The Community Council, however, did not have an active program of resident outreach, so in spite of their policy of welcoming resident input, decision making remained in the hands of a small group of older residents. The Community Council disbanded in 1992 because of infighting and the lack of resident leadership.

In their 1991 Needs Assessment, Rainier Vista residents identified the creation of a family support program as a high priority. Residents then met with service providers to discuss creating the Rainier Vista Family Center. Several elements were deemed critical: neighbor-to-neighbor outreach, a friendly home-like atmosphere, child care and transportation, and multicultural education so that neighbors could better understand and appreciate the culture and traditions represented in their diverse population.[4]

The Seattle Housing Authority applied for funding for the Rainier Vista Family Center from the new Seattle Families and Education Levy, which was passed in 1991. As the lead organization, the SHA recruited Family Services, Head Start, Neighborhood House, the Rainier Vista Community Council, the Seattle Public Library, the Seattle Public Schools, and Variety Boys and Girls Club to serve as primary organizational partners for the proposed family center. The groups pledged to support the Rainier Vista Family Center in a variety of ways, from technical assistance to service and counseling provision.

A revised draft of the family center proposal, with Neighborhood House as the lead organization, was approved by the City in March 1992. The Rainier Vista Family Center was inaugurated in early 1993, with a coordinator-community organizer on board. In initial efforts to involve the community, door-to-door outreach interviews were conducted with leaders of key ethnic groups. Sixteen leaders were invited to a meeting to formulate plans to form a new Rainier Vista Community Council. This preliminary meeting established a solid foundation for cooperation among the development's diverse community

leadership. The core group of leaders eventually evolved into the Rainier Vista Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team began to hold bi-weekly meetings, each planned and led by Team members. In July 1993, they were trained to conduct one-on-one interviews with their neighbors. The group continues to serve today as the policy-setting, community outreach body at Rainier Vista. Despite staff changes, the central role of the Leadership Team has remained constant.

The RVFC has begun to collaborate with many nearby service providers, ranging from the Refugee Women's Alliance to the Variety Boys and Girls Club to a Neighborhood House Center. Collaborations include referrals and setting up joint programs.

Key Events

1991
- Needs assessment of Rainier Vista identifies the creation of a family center as a top priority.
- Seattle Families and Education Levy passes.

1992
City of Seattle approves the revised proposal for the Rainier Vista Family Center.

1993
- Rainier Vista Family Center opens and organization of key services begins.
- Leadership Team forms.

Organization and Governance

The Rainier Vista Family Center is one of four programs which comprise the Seattle Family Support Center Demonstration Project, funded by the Seattle Families and Education Levy. The RVFC's coordinator meets twice monthly with the coordinators of Seattle's three other family centers to exchange ideas.

Rainier Vista's Leadership Team serves informally as the Family Center's governing body. It identifies resident concerns and holds the SHA and local service providers accountable to address them. The Leadership Team is inclusive -- all members of the community are welcome to join -- and non-hierarchical. Structured to allow for the most participation in decision making, the Leadership Team uses a system of rotating chairs. This method, according to a Leadership Team member, ensures that

"responsibility is shared" and that there is not "one big boss calling all the shots." [5]

The Rainier Vista Family Center is officially a program of the Neighborhood House, a citywide human service agency with a long tradition of work in public housing communities. Neighborhood House provides fiscal and administrative back-up, but day-to-day program decisions are handled locally. There is a full-time coordinator at the Rainier Vista Family Center; other activities are carried out by volunteers from the community.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

One of the Rainier Vista Family Center's strengths is its ability to involve residents in planning and participating in its activities. The monthly reports written by the coordinator consistently list tenant suggestions for programming, and detail the current status and progress of such endeavors. An example from the October 1993 Report reads:

> "In a meeting with an African American man, he expressed a deep concern about the young people of Rainier Vista. He talked about trying to have some ex-gang members come here to Rainier Vista to talk with our young people. I [the coordinator] will follow up with him and try to connect him with others that share these concerns." [6]

The degree of tenant involvement is perhaps best epitomized by the Rainier Vista Leadership Team, the multiracial council of resident leaders who share the responsibility of answering to and advocating for their neighbors' needs and concerns. The Leadership Team came into its own in October 1993, when it successfully confronted the SHA to demand the construction of long-promised storage sheds for Rainier Vista residents. Since then, the Leadership Team has grown stronger and more independent, working to involve more families through outreach.[7] Many of the currently offered activities and programs were created by Leadership Team members. The Team's general goal is clear: "To provide a better, safer place to raise our children and live."[8]

Although members of the Leadership Team have not received any formal diversity training, they have demonstrated an unusual sensitivity to multicultural issues and interaction. Translators, often residents themselves, are always present at Leadership Team meetings, and time is taken to ensure that all people understand what is being discussed. Members bring food from their respective cultures to share with each other, celebrating their varied backgrounds while working together on common problems. Recent immigrants are encouraged to run meetings in their native tongue (which is then translated into English), thereby allowing native English speakers to experience following a meeting in a foreign language. There is a widely-held belief among residents that increased understanding of, and interaction with each other will decrease the tension and isolation in the community, and will make Rainier Vista a more positive environment for individuals and families of all races and ethnicities.

Goals and Philosophy

The Rainier Vista Family Center seeks to empower families and promote success for all children by increasing family strength and self-sufficiency, family social support, positive parent-child relationships, positive school-home relationships, and positive child development.

In pursuing these goals, the Center subscribes to the following principles:

- It recognizes that all families can benefit from support, and offers an open climate that will encourage broad participation.
- It recognizes, appreciates, and celebrates diversity of culture, ethnicity, age, gender, and family style.
- It builds on family strengths, with a focus on empowerment and self-determination, to enable families to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for self-sufficiency.
- It involves the neighborhood, community residents, and potential participants in the Center development, so that sponsoring organizations will seek and respond to the expression of local community needs on an on-going basis.

Leadership meetings at Rainier Vista are often conducted in more than one language. Here, one resident translates from Vietnamese to English. (photo by Mary Lassen)

Program

Many of the ideas for Rainier Vista Family Center programs have come from the residents themselves. Sensitive to the schedules of working families, the Center attempts to offer several of its activities on evenings and weekends.

The Leadership Team, a multi-faceted council of ethnically diverse residents who are trained as community leaders, provides a channel of communication between ethnic groups. Members conduct outreach interviews, familiarizing themselves with their neighbors and their concerns. The East African Women's Support Group holds monthly meetings for support, information sharing, and outings. Meetings are conducted in the native language, and facilitated by an East African resident. The Vietnamese Women's Support Group is organized by a Vietnamese staff member from Neighborhood House, and is conducted entirely in Vietnamese. The Domestic Violence Support Group provides a weekly discussion forum for victims of domestic violence, and operates a confidential telephone hotline. The Mom's and Women's Support Group offers support for women of all ages and ethnicities, and is co-coordinated by a resident and Neighborhood House staff.

Cultural events and celebrations allow different ethnic groups to celebrate their heritage. These celebrations range from New Year's celebrations to ethnic potlucks; they serve to foster interaction and cooperation among residents. Free income tax preparation and assistance is offered weekly during tax season through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. At Christmas time, the RVFC assists the Neighborhood House and the Boys and Girls Club in operating a seasonal "toy shop" where youth and adult residents can purchase donated toys using "Christmas bucks" they have accumulated through volunteering their services in the community. Finally, although it does not have a formalized referral process, the Family Center does outreach and recruitment for its collaborating community agencies, such as Renton Technical College's "Project Excel" or the Refugee Women's Alliance's "Raising Children in America" parenting classes.

Collaboration

Since one of the Family Center's major roles is "to facilitate closer communication between existing community services, and with the residents that are in the community they serve,"[9] many of

the original organizational partners of the Rainier Vista Family Center have become collaborators, as have some additional community groups. The collaborators are:

- ***Neighborhood House***, the umbrella social service organization which provides services to the Rainier Vista public housing community. Its Neighborhood House Center offers emergency assistance, referrals, case management, family support, refugee and elderly outreach, afterschool and tutoring-mentoring programs, crime prevention, and transportation services. (It owns a van that residents can borrow.) The Neighborhood House Center acts as "backup assistance" for the RVFC. There is close collaboration with the Family Center on the "Block Watch Station," where residents can go to ask a Community Police Officer questions and lodge concerns about safety and security issues. It also has a hotline for reporting illegal activities, such as drug dealing. The Rainier Vista Child Care Center, adjacent to the Family Center, is a second Neighborhood House collaborator. The Child Care Center is used by many Rainier Vista residents who participate in the Family Center's programs. In collaboration with RVFC and Washington State University, the Child Care Center offers bi-weekly "Food and Nutrition Workshops."

- ***The Variety Boys and Girls Club***, located adjacent to the Family Center, offers gymnasium space, the Arts Reach Program (art skills for youth with parental participation), and co-sponsors the Christmas Toy Shop.

- ***The Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)*** collaborates with RVFC on the "Family Tutoring Program," an intergenerational family literacy program offering instruction in small groups; parenting classes for refugees and immigrants, and homework and reading assistance for their children. The program includes cultural activities and history. The Refugee Women's Alliance also uses the Family Center for its weekly "Domestic Violence Intervention Program," and Center staff help recruit for its "Raising Children in America" parenting class.

- ***The Employment Opportunities Center*** provides a half-time project coordinator to organize youth pre-employment training and job placement seminars.

- ***Renton Technical College*** collaborates on "Project Excel," a six-week course on career planning and choices for single and/or pregnant women interested in making the transition to full employment and non-traditional careers.

- ***The Seattle Community College and Family Services*** offer twice-weekly ESL classes to the Rainier Vista community.

Funding

In 1994, the Rainier Vista Family Center received $40,000 from the Seattle Families and Education Levy to cover operating costs, salaries, professional contract services, and other basic expenses. It also obtained a $6,000 Parenting Education Grant from the City (which went to the co-sponsorship of the Family Tutoring Program with the Refugee Women's Alliance), and $1,250 from the SHA's Drug Elimination Program Planned Resident Activities Fund for small resident projects. Its 1994 total operating budget was $47,250 -- relatively small compared with the budgets of Seattle's three other family centers, which operate on budgets of $125,000. Further funding for smaller projects within the community comes from the Seattle Housing Authority's Drug Elimination Program Planned Resident Activities Fund. Through this fund, Rainier Vista residents sponsored Cambodian and Laotian New Year's celebrations, and began an ESL conversation group.

Monitoring and Evaluation

An external evaluation in 1994, conducted by independent evaluator Janet Youngren Miller for the City of Seattle, Department of Housing and Human Services, measured the progress of Seattle's three older family centers. This was accomplished through tracking program offerings and participation rates; observing sites; videotaping center activities and participants; holding discussions with center staff members; and surveying center partners, collaborators, and participants. The

evaluation found that the Seattle family centers have become important structures in their communities:

> "Response to the centers' programs and climate was positive and enthusiastic. Analysis of social need and social network items from the survey showed congruence between the needs expressed by parents and their ratings of support functions of the family centers."[10]

Because of its smaller size and later inception, the Rainier Vista Family Center was not included in this 1994 evaluation; it will be included, however, in Miller's next report. In preparation, the Family Center is installing a database system to facilitate the process.

An informal self-evaluation of the Family Center's programs and projects is carried out through door-to-door outreach interviews and written surveys. Originally the outreach interviews were conducted by the Center coordinator (with the help of volunteer translators in many cases), but in late 1993 the task was turned over to the Leadership Team. The purpose of the interviews is to identify residents' common concerns, needs, and service and programming ideas, and to familiarize residents with one another. Having members of the Leadership Team conduct the interviews allows them to be directly in touch with the residents they represent.

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

Despite its brief history, the Rainier Vista Family Center has established a foundation for community cohesion. While much work remains, the commitment of the Leadership Team provides the basis for a diverse and coherent program.

Strengthening relationships with collaborative partners is a primary goal. The RVFC would like to see increased cooperation on programs and services, and would like to reach other nearby service providers like Head Start and Family Services to begin cooperative endeavors. There are plans to increase collaboration with the adjacent Rainier Vista Child Care Center for family outings and child care during Family Center meetings.

Recruiting volunteers is a second goal. With only one paid staff person, the Family Center is very dependent on volunteer

involvement. It is thus faced with the challenge of finding residents willing to organize and run programs and events on a volunteer basis. Certain programs, like a peer conversation group for ESL students, disbanded after a few months because it lacked native English speaking volunteers. To remedy the dearth of volunteers, the Leadership Team has used outreach to involve more residents, and the Center has paid residents modest stipends for certain organizing and recruiting efforts. The Family Center is also exploring the possibility of starting a Youth Council modelled on the Leadership Team to increase the involvement of young people.

Expanding physical space so that the Center can offer larger programs is a third concern. Its two-bedroom unit is only large enough to house limited office space and a small meeting area. For larger events, the Center must now use a nearby community space shared by other Rainier Vista service providers.

Finally, decreasing the physical and social isolation of recent immigrants as well as the jealousies and cultural misunderstandings harbored by all groups are on-going challenges. The Family Center plans to continue combatting these challenges by offering more culturally and linguistically appropriate parenting classes, support groups, and workshops, as well as by sponsoring inclusive cultural celebrations and community events.

Reflections

Judith Minaker, resident and founding member of the Leadership Team:

"The Rainier Vista Family Center is a place I can go for friendship and belonging. It's about time we as residents of the Housing Authority take back ownership of our community and play a vital role in deciding what services we want and need. Our Family Center allows us a safe and stressless place to do just that. I am proud of our Family Center and am glad it's here."

Kathy Brewer, resident and Rainier Vista Family Center volunteer:

"The Family Center is part of our community family puzzle, something that enhances the growth of our diverse families here at Rainier Vista. I can say for myself that the Family Center is the

pot of gold and we the community of families are the spectrum of colors with an oracle of hope that is glowing brighter with the enhancement of the Family Center."

Paul Beals, Family Center Coordinator-Community Organizer: "You really want it to be a safe place to live...and you want it to be a community where thugs find out that this is not a place to come to try to do drugs or do crime because we are watching out for one another.

"You'll see [recent immigrants] at one meeting, struggling their way through saying something in English, and the next meeting I'll ask them to speak completely in their own language, and they're an entirely different person. All that confidence is there, and everyone begins to see that [this resident] is actually a really sharp person."

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COMMUNITY BUILDING IN PARTNERSHIP, INC.

Location:
Baltimore, Maryland

Program Operator:
Community Building in Partnership, Inc. (non-profit organization with public/private representation)

Year Program Began:
1990

Type of Program:
Broad-based neighborhood transformation effort.

Key Program Components:
Work underway simultaneously in eight areas: physical development, health care, education, family development, substance abuse, public safety, community pride and spirit, and employment/economic development.

Total Annual Budget:
$2 million (with additional funds for housing and services)

Primary Funding Sources:
Private, City, Community Development Block Grant

Points of Distinction:
- Public housing seen as part of broader community transformation effort.
- Most services located off-site.
- Ambitious and expensive agenda.

Population Served:
Predominantly African-American

Introduction

One of the most ambitious efforts to transform a low-income neighborhood began in 1990 in the Sandtown-Winchester area of Baltimore, Maryland. Community Building in Partnership, Inc. (CBP, Inc.) is part of this far-reaching and still not fully funded plan to empower an entire community, including the tenants of Gilmor Homes, one of Baltimore's oldest public housing developments. CBP, Inc. envisions the transformation of dysfunctional conditions and systems to enable all residents to reach their highest potential. As the organization struggles to improve dramatically the quality of life in the broader Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood, it is useful to examine the effects of a wider community strategy on the residents of Gilmor Homes. Where does public housing fit within such a strategy? Are the needs of public housing residents being well served? Are they having a strong input into the broader planning and oversight process? Is their own community becoming stronger through targeted organizing efforts?

Community Context

The Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood on Baltimore's west side is one of the city's poorest neighborhoods and visibly demonstrates the effects of decades of disinvestment and neglect. Within seventy-two square blocks live just over 10,300 residents, 99 percent of whom are African-American. Half of the residents live in poverty and nearly 90 percent of the births are to unmarried women. Forty percent of the households report no earnings. Almost three-quarters of the housing stock is substandard. Students in neighborhood schools consistently perform well below state standards. Only 43 percent of Sandtown residents age 25 or older have completed high school. Drugs and crime are epidemic, particularly among youth. Armed robberies and rape occur in Sandtown at five times the rate of middle-income Baltimore neighborhoods. Residents die of preventable and treatable diseases at alarming rates. Fifty percent of the women in the community receive no prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy and only 40 percent of the children are immunized by the age of two. There are few parks and no large chain supermarkets.[1]

Gilmor Homes is a 571-unit, low-rise public housing development located in this community. Although the development was recently modernized, problems with the construction work persist.[2] Ninety-nine percent of the families residing in the development are African-American and 85 percent of the families are headed by women.[3]

Despite the current socioeconomic condition of the Sandtown-Winchester community, it was at one time one of the country's most famous African-American neighborhoods. Located fifteen blocks from downtown, it is the site of the high school attended by former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and the cultural and commercial hub of black Baltimore. With the end of formal segregation, many middle class residents departed, taking with them local businesses and wealth, and leaving behind the most economically vulnerable residents.

Origins and History

The Sandtown-Winchester effort is a collaboration of The Enterprise Foundation, city government, and community residents. Enterprise founder James Rouse helped pioneer urban shopping malls, built the planned community of Columbia, Maryland, and developed festival marketplaces such as Boston's Faneuil Hall and Baltimore's Harborplace. In 1981 -- a millionaire many times over -- he left the Rouse Co. and formed Enterprise, dedicated to building and rehabilitating housing for low-income families. Conversations began in 1989 between Rouse, Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke and the church-based organizing group Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD). The organizers then approached community residents and formed Community Building in Partnership, Inc., launching an eight-month process to identify the neighborhood's most pressing needs and developing a vision and goals for transformation in the following areas: physical development, health care, education, family development, substance abuse, public safety, community pride and spirit, and employment/community economic development.

In early 1992, CBP, Inc. launched a second phase of community planning, forming program design clusters to develop three-year action plans. This work developed into "A Proposal to Transform the Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood," which was

The Wall of Pride, located in the Sandtown-Winchester community, celebrates African-American culture and contributions to American history. Here, a section of the Wall shows Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, and Langston Hughes. (photo by John Beam)

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reviewed and endorsed through a neighborhood-wide process before submission to the Schmoke administration. Planning efforts were coupled with initiatives designed to address immediate needs and build the community's ownership of the transformation process. The initial focus on modernization at Gilmor Homes and development of 227 new townhouses for home ownership under the HUD Nehemiah Program communicated positive signals about the commitment to physical and social revitalization of the neighborhood. Enterprise Foundation Vice President Patrick Costigan describes these as the "anchors" for the broader transformation process.[4] More than fifty projects and services were initiated in the Sandtown-Winchester community, including the development of a new multi-purpose community center, a health outreach program targeting pregnant women, the planting of over thirty community gardens, the establishment of a residents' food and clothing cooperative, and the production of a neighborhood newspaper. Community organizing and leadership development activities were central to the initiative's early efforts, as were negotiations with sources of public and private funding.

Key Events

1981
- Enterprise Foundation is founded by James Rouse.
- BUILD is founded.

1989
Conversations begin between James Rouse, Mayor Kurt Schmoke, and BUILD.

1990
Initial community planning process begins through newly formed Community Building in Partnership, Inc.

1992
- Cluster groups start translating goals into specific, workable strategies.
- An abandoned school building is converted into a Community Support Center and opened for initial program operations.

1993
- $13 million HUD-financed rehabilitation of Gilmor Homes is completed.
- Comprehensive neighborhood plan is approved by neighborhood and City.

1994
- Family Resource Center opens, with emphasis on serving Gilmor Homes residents.
- CBP, Inc. incorporates.

Organization and Governance

The Sandtown-Winchester transformation is overseen by Community Building in Partnership, Inc. The organization has two basic functions: 1) to work with existing community groups, churches, businesses, and public and private agencies to coordinate and, as necessary, restructure the delivery of programs and services; and 2) to directly develop and operate new programs or services as needed until a neighborhood organization or agency is capable of assuming the management functions.[5] CBP, Inc.'s interim eleven-member board of directors is comprised of a majority of area residents, but does include some non-residents who lend professional expertise to the effort. The Mayor currently appoints the board members through a consultative process with neighborhood leaders.

CBP, Inc.'s overall coordination responsibilities include setting policy to guide program implementation and allocating financial resources to seed new program activities. This includes seeking needed policy changes, waivers, regulation agreements with local, state and federal agencies and fundraising from public and private sources. CBP, Inc. ensures that program activities are responsibly documented and independently evaluated. Over time, the organization's responsibilities will evolve to provide more oversight and accountability and less service provision and operations management.

The thirty staff members have been selected for their skills in management and program development. A former key aide to Mayor Schmoke, Barbara Bostick-Hunt, heads the CBP, Inc. staff. Eight community advocates work for the Partnership, involving their neighbors in planning and activities such as organizing around public safety and sanitation, gardening/open space development, and maintaining the grounds of Gilmor Homes. In addition, several Sandtown-Winchester residents have been recruited as VISTA volunteers to assist with education and youth support, as well as with general organizing.

The role of The Enterprise Foundation in Sandtown-Winchester is to provide technical, managerial, and fundraising

support and to help build community capacity. Enterprise has provided considerable program development and support in its area of expertise -- low-income and affordable housing and finance -- and helped to recruit practitioners in other areas such as health and education to work with residents. The Enterprise Foundation has four full-time staff members working on the effort.

The Gilmor Homes Tenant Council represents the tenants' interest with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City and on the CBP, Inc. Board of Directors.

Parent Involvement and Tenant Organization

CBP, Inc. serves a broad community, of which Gilmor Homes is only one part. According to a CBP, Inc. statement of purpose, the goal for Gilmor Homes and other local clusters of low-income housing is to have "strong resident organizations participating fully in transformation activities."[6] Current efforts build on a tradition of community involvement by a small core of leaders. The Gilmor Homes Tenant Council has a long history of encouraging residents to care for one another through informal mutual assistance programs and food and clothes distribution programs. As drug problems in the community became more severe, the Tenant Council also placed a strong emphasis on drug education, and it continues efforts to improve the development's physical condition. Recently, the tenant association has been involved in working with the Baltimore Housing Authority (BHA) to formulate proposals on tenant maintenance and rent escrow accounts for home ownership.

With staff assistance from the Housing Authority, the Tenant Council has organized a training program for its block captains, a drug abuse prevention program, a Beautiful Block contest, a "rat rub-out" campaign, and other community-building activities. A small unit currently operated by the police department serves as the hub of tenant activity in the development.

Some Gilmor Homes parents have become involved in school reform efforts through the Parent Academy process in the three New Compact Schools. Others have joined the advisory boards of local programs and CBP, Inc. itself. It is difficult to quantify the level of public housing tenant involvement in the broader community transformation process, but it is clear that bridging the

gap between public housing and the rest of the community is a high priority. The community organizing operates on a collaborative, non-conflict model which attempts to promote engagement in the larger process.

CBP, Inc. utilizes three basic strategies to promote community involvement. One, it identifies effective leaders to guide CBP, Inc.'s program activities and the activity of private and public agencies working in Sandtown. Two, it creates educational and supportive services to help individuals and families achieve their highest potential. Three, it works with public and private agencies to ensure that they respond to community needs and advance the transformation agenda. This ultimately allows residents to influence policymakers and institutions that control resources flowing into the community.

Goals and Philosophy

Community Building in Partnership, Inc. strives to "to build the capacity of neighborhood institutions, support families in their efforts to become self-sufficient, and re-assert an ethic of community responsibility."[7] The overall goal of CBP, Inc. is to build a viable working community in Sandtown-Winchester. Five basic steps to this goal were developed during the planning process:

1. Enable all residents to live in a safe, nurturing environment and enjoy a significantly improved quality of life.

2. Prepare all children to succeed in school.

3. Prepare all young adults to enter the workforce or continue on to higher education.

4. Enable all families to support and care for themselves.

5. Mobilize and empower Sandtown residents to sustain an improved quality of life.

The focus on broad-based change and building community in Sandtown-Winchester has resulted in an extremely ambitious agenda for CBP, Inc.: to transform all systems and conditions --

from education, human services, and health care to public safety, employment, commercial/retail development and recreation -- affecting the quality of life in the neighborhood.[8] Housing is seen as the platform upon which the neighborhood transformation program will occur. A key organizational belief of CBP, Inc. holds that:

> "The availability of decent, affordable housing is integral to the achievement of the basic transformation goals - from stabilizing the environment to enabling families to become self-sufficient, care for their children and assert responsibility for their community."[9]

Five-year goals for improving the conditions of public and private housing in the community include:

- Rehabilitating or building 3,100 housing units.
- Creating a spectrum of housing options that meet the economic and family needs of existing residents and re-establish a neighborhood housing market.
- Developing neighborhood parks and open space and improving streets, sidewalks and lighting to reinforce housing and other improvements in the community.
- Integrating housing development activities with community building and family development to strengthen neighborhood institutions and families.

Program

Public Housing: Strengthening supports to families and building indigenous community capacity are the most crucial elements of CBP, Inc.'s Sandtown-Winchester effort. Some program components focus directly on the needs of families living in public housing. CBP, Inc. works closely with the Housing Authority of the City of Baltimore to ensure that all public housing units are well managed and services coordinated. Efforts are being mounted to encourage a strong

resident organization within Gilmor Homes, as well as to facilitate tenant participation in the full scope of neighborhood-wide transformation activities. Community organizers work to develop focused strategies for involving residents in social services, education, health, substance abuse prevention, youth programs, employment and training, and home ownership programs.

Within Gilmor Homes, the Baltimore Housing Authority operates extensive child care programs (Head Start, preschool and afterschool), as well as counseling services. There are several substance abuse prevention and treatment programs and organized senior citizen activities. Additionally, a family self-sufficiency program provides support for young adults entering the work force or continuing on to higher education. The BHA also funds a block watch system and general outreach to residents of the development.

Integrated Family Services: CBP, Inc. works to transform the outmoded systems of human service delivery in the community where rigid eligibility requirements limit the ability of public aid programs to respond to the needs of families. With the objective of making human services address the needs of the *whole* family, a health and human services providers consortium has been established. This entity facilitates the availability of information and referral about human services at all places where family members receive services or participate in an activity; it simplifies the application process so that families are only asked once for basic information.

CBP, Inc.'s Mount Street Community Support Center, located three blocks from Gilmor Homes, is the focal point for service integration in the community. The choice of an off-site location for the center was quite deliberate, in keeping with the vision of integrating public housing with the larger community. Core services such as job training and development, youth and senior services, a food and clothing bank, blood pressure screening, adult education, and emergency services are located in the facility. Other organizations use it for outreach and education activities. HUD funds have been committed to develop the site into a "one-step stop" for services in the neighborhood.

There are several other critical elements to CBP, Inc.'s work in the community. These include The Healthy Start, A Vision for Health Community Compact, and a collaboration between CBP, Inc. and the Baltimore City Public Schools. The Healthy Start uses door-to-door outreach by residents to provide prenatal care and services to all pregnant women in the community. The Healthy Start also provides outreach and support services for pediatric health care, and family planning and child development. Screening services for senior citizens for diabetes, cholesterol and hypertension are provided through Coppin State College.

A Vision for Health Community Compact (VHCC) has been developed by CBP, Inc. as has a health provider consortium[10] to address the six health service components identified by the community: primary adult care, comprehensive school-based health care for children, substance abuse treatment and prevention, outreach, school-based adult health promotion, and violence prevention. Each consortium member has participated in the development, implementation and financing of some component of VHCC.

Education: CBP, Inc. works collaboratively with the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) to improve the educational outcomes for children who attend the three public elementary schools in the neighborhood. A Sandtown-Winchester Education Policy Steering Committee, with a majority of parent representatives, manages these schools with the BCPS.

Building from the belief that "all children can learn," the committee has paid considerable attention to family development, including the establishment of a Parent Academy Volunteer Program in each school. All school staff members are required to participate in special trainings designed to provide them with the tools to ensure each child reaches his or her full potential. Parents and staff have together selected an appropriate instructional model. In addition, an "Early Childhood Collaborative" of child care and early learning providers has been organized.

The Sandtown-Winchester Education Policy Steering Committee has responsibility for establishing a school readiness program to ensure that:

- All children from birth to age five - and their families - are prepared to participate in and benefit from education.
- Belief systems, skills, competencies, programs and administrative flexibility deliver an effective course of instruction.
- Policies for evaluating staff and students are set.
- A capital plan is developed.
- Fundraising is a priority.[11]

While the major focus of the collaboration is on the elementary level, it has also started to assist students as they move from middle school to high school, and then from high school to work or higher education. Two advocates from CBP, Inc. have been assigned to work with chronically absent youth. Next Generations, a program which supports children through the full learning cycle, has been developed; work has been initiated with area middle school administrators to create greater cooperation and continuity between the elementary and middle school; and implementation of a "school-to work" program is underway.

Substance Abuse: Since Gilmor residents report that the biggest obstacles to transforming the neighborhood are drugs and drug-related crime, a comprehensive approach to substance abuse prevention and treatment has been developed by CBP, Inc. The effort is premised on the beliefs that prevention starts with strong family units and requires education and healthy alternatives to using drugs; that treatment should be available to everyone in need regardless of

ability to pay, and it should be comprehensive enough to deal with the host of issues confronting the addict and his/her family.

Substance abuse counselors help family support teams provide home-based counseling; substance abuse prevention programs are provided in schools and other community sites; and Bright Hope House, an existing residential treatment facility in the Sandtown-Winchester community, has expanded its work to serve Gilmor Homes residents.

Economic Development: A Neighborhood Employment and Training Center helps residents secure jobs and provides assistance to local entrepreneurs. Efforts to train and place residents in jobs connected to the community transformation (construction, lead paint abatement, community organizing, and health promotion) have proved moderately successful. A "community improvement jobs" program, which offers subsidized employment to residents while they receive training, is also underway, as is work with area industries to provide training connected to jobs in the regional economy.

Collaboration

The overall CBP, Inc. effort is one of the most sophisticated collaborative attempts to bring about broad-based change in any community in the United States. Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, an early collaborator, has scaled back its involvement to work with residents in the Nehemiah Homes.[12] Collaborative efforts involve a mix of public and private housing entities. The redevelopment effort at Gilmor Homes was a collaboration of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, Gilmor Homes residents, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Other collaborations also address various program areas:

- ***The Sandtown-Winchester Education Policy Steering Committee*** -- comprised of parents, community and school representative, principals, and key officials from the city, the Board of School Commissioners and CBP, Inc. -- now oversees the three local elementary schools.

- ***An Education Consortium*** consisting of scholars from local colleges and universities, education consultants, service providers, businesses, religious institutions, community organizations, and parent groups has been formed to advise and support the New Compact Schools.

- ***An Early Childhood Collaborative*** of child care and early education providers has been organized.

- ***The Vision for Health Provider Consortium*** has agreed to share financial and programmatic responsibilities to assure the sustainability of the community's health system.

A consortium of human service providers has been established to coordinate regular communication, planning, training, and sharing of facilities. A group of forty-seven area churches has been organized to better coordinate some of the anti-drug, crime prevention and other transformation-related activities.

Funding

One of the major challenges to implementing the CBP, Inc. vision is locating the necessary financial resources. With major support from the City of Baltimore, Community Development Block Grant Funds, and private sources, core funding for CBP, Inc.'s management team and services totalled $2 million in 1994. Funds must, however, be identified to initiate new services and implement necessary changes in the basic systems of education, housing, employment, and health care. To that end, a three-year, $149 million budget for all aspects of the housing program has been developed. Since CBP, Inc. states that "it is not now possible to fully anticipate the costs...in implementing the full scope of the transformation process in Sandtown-Winchester,"[13] it will clearly be necessary to "redirect" some of the existing financial resources already deployed in the community to support the transformation agenda. Presently, nearly $60 million per year from federal, state, and local resources is allocated for human services, physical and economic development, education, and individual entitlements in the community.

For Gilmor Homes, $13.3 million from other funding sources has already been spent on physical renovations. Other work,

including the construction of a community center, is proposed for the future.

Monitoring and Evaluation

While CBP, Inc. documented its work from the earliest days, it was only in mid-1994 that the organization initiated a formal evaluation process. The Conservation Company of New York, working with the Schaefer Center at the University of Baltimore, is conducting a multi-year evaluation of the community transformation effort. The team will formally document the process, evaluate programs, provide internal feedback, and report lessons and findings to policymakers, funders, and leaders across the country.

Future Challenges and Implementation Issues

Gilmor Homes and CBP, Inc. have identified seven challenges. First, the degree to which Gilmor Homes residents are engaged in this transformation effort must be carefully evaluated over time. The strategy of having most programs outside of the development is quite different from the other efforts described in this volume. Closer attention to the degree of participation in, and utilization of, neighborhood-based services by public housing tenants is needed.

Second, there is considerable pressure from the community that jobs created through the CBP, Inc. process and by the organization itself should go to local residents. Establishing the training and support needed to realize this goal remains a significant challenge.

Third, since transforming a low-income neighborhood into a strong, viable community is extremely costly, identifying the financial resources to support this effort is a major challenge. While some funding can be found by redirecting existing resources, substantial new dollars must be identified.

Fourth, finding ways to allow residents to own their housing is a goal. There are plans for a pilot "escrow for home ownership" program. Increases in a tenant's rent contribution caused by a rise in the tenant's income would be escrowed and eventually applied as a down payment for a home. This approach would be augmented as necessary with a "home ownership voucher" once a family actually purchases a home. In return for this incentive,

families would be required to participate in CBP, Inc.'s family development and community-building initiatives. There is also interest in establishing a program through which residents are offered a reduction in rent in return for performing property maintenance tasks; this would require further discussions with the Internal Revenue Service.

Fifth, producing tangible results while not rushing through the planning process is a challenge. The planning needed for an effort of this scope is considerable, and extremely important if true community ownership is to be established. Yet, residents who have been living for years in poor housing or who have failed to receive needed services are anxious for immediate change.

Given the immense amount of publicity the Sandtown-Winchester transformation effort has generated, the project is seen by many as a bellwether for the possibility of change in poor urban communities. Should it fail, the arguments that inner-city change is a lost cause will be strengthened: too big, expensive, and hopeless for even the most well-intentioned and comprehensive programs. Ensuring that this does not happen is a sixth challenge.

Finally, although the CBP, Inc. effort is quite young, The Enterprise Foundation is already beginning dissemination activity in Miami, with a goal of working in six cities within three years. The pressures on Sandtown-Winchester as the flagship site will be considerable, and must be carefully balanced to ensure that additional demands do not overwhelm the program's successes.

Reflections

Patrick Costigan, Vice President, The Enterprise Foundation: "In looking at the Sandtown-Winchester community, public housing emerges as an enormous asset. There are nearly 1,000 units of conventional and scattered-site public housing in the neighborhood, a quarter of the total housing stock. As we upgrade our human service and educational systems, we have to be concerned about preserving housing affordability in the community. Of the three strategies we have used (increasing individual home ownership, promoting non-profit ownership, and improving public housing), only public housing guarantees affordability over the long term."

Margaret Ruffin, President, Gilmor Homes Tenant Council:
"The Gilmor Homes Tenant Council works with the people in our community. We focus a lot on helping families who are having a hard time -- with food distribution, clothing and money for burials. We've also been involved in registering tenants to vote and organizing a system of block captains. We are working to make sure that the services that CBP, Inc. organizes benefit public housing tenants and that the jobs created through this process go to community residents. We're the people who know best what's needed."

Thelma Millard, Director, Division of Family Services, Housing Authority of Baltimore City:
"We have learned a lot from our family support initiatives in Baltimore public housing. We know that it's important to include parenting skills, early childhood education and follow-up with the children once they reach elementary school. It's absolutely necessary to focus on employment for the parents; this means offering GED and training programs as well as helping residents find jobs.

"Public housing residents need to be involved in planning the programs which are supposed to benefit them. You can't bring in programs and expect people to accept them if they haven't been involved in formulating them. We need more initiatives which look at public housing as part of a larger community. This will help public housing residents get past the stigma of living in public housing and be seen as citizens of Baltimore City."

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CONCLUSION

These models offer promise for new "bottom-up, top-down" approaches that enable public housing residents and their allies to forge successfully the link between housing and family support. The models are still small in scale: they operate in one public housing development or, at the largest, in several developments in one city. These initiatives are often fueled by the extraordinary commitment of key staff and tenant leaders, and funded from a patchwork of sources. With a few exceptions, the programs have not given serious attention to documentation or evaluation of their work, so their full impact remains unknown.

The general public is largely uninformed about the positive efforts underway in public housing. Indeed, most outsiders' knowledge of public housing communities embraces popular misconceptions about "those people" who live in "the projects." Women on AFDC are defined as "welfare queens," or men, especially young men of color, are defined as "gang members." Tenants in public housing tend to be seen as deviant, as "the other." Such distorted beliefs are reinforced by hostile media references, public derision by political figures, and negative portrayals in movies and in books.[1] As Rosetta Robinson of the Commonwealth Tenants Association puts it:

> "People look at those of us living in public housing as undecent. They need to take a different look at public housing, what it's all about, and what the people there are all about. We are nothing if we allow people to make us nothing." [2]

Many observers underestimate the challenges that women and children living in public housing face on a day-to-day basis. They deny the difficulties of raising children with limited resources, inadequate education and human service provision, and substandard living conditions. As Terry Williams and William Kornblum write in *The Uptown Kids: Struggle and Hope in the Projects*, an eloquent portrait of New York City public housing youth:

> "We cannot understand or appreciate their resilience until we recognize the hardship, risk and trauma they have had to endure. We must also know what obstacles they face;

> how much racism they experience, in home and out; how many deaths they witness; how much and what kind of personal rejection they have had in their lives. Only then will we comprehend their struggles, and the significance of their survival and, indeed, their victory."[3]

The programs profiled here allow a deeper look at the real people living and working in public housing.

There are a variety of ways to produce quality programs for families and children, but the choice of program operator, focus, extent and quality of collaboration, and degree of tenant involvement in the early stages all define the future shape of the initiatives in important ways. Flexible and sustained funding, the ability to adjust program offerings in response to changing conditions, and a commitment to inclusion are characteristic of the most successful efforts.

Examination of the origins of the programs suggests that the project's early patterns of development are essential in framing future growth. The sponsoring organizations fall into three broad categories: public housing authorities, community-based nonprofit service organizations, and public housing resident groups. There are strengths and weaknesses inherent in each. Public housing authorities have a greater ability to link family support initiatives to on-site physical and management improvement efforts. They also can identify and rehabilitate the space needed for program operations, a barrier which can appear insurmountable to outside organizations. Generally, they are well positioned to coordinate planning and program implementation with other components of local government. Yet, while housing authority-run programs may successfully involve residents in an advisory capacity, they are awkwardly positioned to engage tenants in community organizing, since public housing authorities can become targets of such efforts. The power dynamics in the housing authority/tenant relationship are inherently unequal. As a result, while housing authority-run programs may provide excellent services, residents operating within them may be unable to achieve a truly equal partnership.

Housing authorities which provide generally high-quality housing have demonstrated the capacity to implement high-quality family support initiatives, such as the two housing authority-run programs profiled here. Other public housing authorities have

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achieved considerably less success in providing decent, safe, and sanitary housing, and are poorly positioned to run an effective family support program. It is interesting that the key staff members involved in designing both the Family Learning Centers (Austin Housing Authority) and the Work Force Youth Unemployment Prevention Program (Cambridge Housing Authority) have backgrounds in community development or education, outside the domain of more traditional housing authority staff experience. In both instances, staff members have displayed a level of commitment and competence that may be difficult to replicate in other settings. These two programs tend to function without a high degree of interference from other components of their respective housing authority, and without being expected to carry out other unrelated agendas (for example, supporting unpopular housing authority policies).

Programs run by community-based nonprofit organizations can benefit from the group's family support experience in other settings. For example, Project UPLIFT is part of a larger organization which promotes family support throughout North Carolina. The expertise developed in other communities informs its work in Ray Warren Homes, and vice versa. The nonprofit organization may be more experienced in recruiting and training staff. Depending on the organization, there may be a track record in attracting public and private funds and the infrastructure in place to manage these grant awards.

Nonprofits vary widely in the extent of their accountability to the community. Some have established board and other advisory structures which maintain broad-based community representation, while others are less connected to the communities they serve. Some nonprofit social service organizations are stuck in a disempowering model of service provision, which relies on a highly professionalized approach. They may have a hard time adjusting to new ways of thinking and acting which are consistent with family support principles.

Local tenant organizations vary widely in their strength and level of sophistication. Some have extensive experience in developing programs for families and children, while others are novices. Some tenant organizations have taken steps to incorporate as a nonprofit entity and have the experience of handling grants and contracts; others have more modest organizational expertise. The groups which conduct ongoing outreach within their

communities are most often those that have a vibrant and democratic organization, while those which depend heavily on a very small core of leaders are not well positioned to assume complex tasks. Some tenant groups have been eager to assume a program operator role, while others have decided that another organization may be better suited to carry out those responsibilities. The degree of attention needed to address housing issues often influences the amount of time a tenant group can spend on family support efforts.

Within each category of organization, there are those that may be more or less well-managed, have stronger or weaker leadership, and have a positive or negative history in the community. It is also important to remember that at a given time, an organization may simply have additional projects which direct attention elsewhere. It seems clear that organizations from each category can embrace a commitment to community-centered family support. While a careful evaluation of these factors needs to be made in each instance, a variety of organizational structures can support such initiatives.

While the choice of sponsoring organization is important, the link to community organizing may be even more critical to successful tenant empowerment. There is widespread agreement, and HUD support, for the position that tenant organizations are generally the best vehicle for accomplishing tenant participation on a consistent basis.[4] Six of the eight groups described have some form of experience with organizing, either through their own efforts or via a collaborative partnership. These programs tend to have evolved further from their original starting point by developing new approaches and becoming more holistic. For example, The Welcome Project's efforts, initially focused on work with Vietnamese and Latina women, now include Haitian women, teens, and, increasingly, ethnic whites. Similarly, as the community has voiced its priorities, Project UPLIFT's efforts have extended to a focus on leadership development work and youth programming. Several other well-rooted community programs have also moved to incorporate youth (preteen and teen) work within their agenda. Still, those efforts which begin with tenant input, but without a structured accountability to an organized community group, often encounter difficulty with maintaining the ability to address emerging issues.

The choice of early collaborative partners has a profound impact on a program's development. With the exception of Project Match and Project UPLIFT, which were deliberately established as demonstration efforts, the remaining organizations have tended to work most closely with the parties who were present at the outset. In the case of the Family Learning Centers, the involvement of the school district and the university has shaped future growth in a profound way. The Commonwealth Tenants Association carefully nurtured relationships with the housing authority, the private management company, and service providers from the surrounding community early in their history. Their subsequent work has depended on these ties. While some groups have attracted support from other community-based partners at a later point, it has been difficult to initiate change in public systems which were not involved from the start. For example, the Family Learning Centers' collaboration with the Austin Independent School District has yielded an increasingly strong relationship between the two entities, including marked changes in interactions between elementary school personnel and parents. Yet by focusing on younger children and their parents, the centers have not involved teenagers extensively. Similarly, The Welcome Project and Rainier Vista Family Center's emphasis on newcomer populations resulted in a greater focus on internal capacity-building among and between different ethnic groups in the developments, but it has meant less attention to building relationships with external organizations.

All programs rely on their ability to broker services from other organizations. Since each group's core program offerings may vary, there are additional resources which families will want. For instance, many of the groups profiled here utilize off-site health, adult education and employment training initiatives to buttress their work. As a result, programs must have the staff capacity to provide resource coordination. Moreover, the efforts rely on a level of service infrastructure to complement their work. Without this broader array of program offerings, the primary work of community-based family support efforts would be far less effective. In summary, the initial scope of a project, and particularly the role which tenants play in the early stages, appears to define its future path.

Several of the organizations profiled that began with an initial focus on service delivery are now attempting to increase tenant

involvement, and are finding the challenges considerable. Careful attention to the mix of participants in the early planning phase, with support for resident involvement, can lay the foundation for truly collaborative ventures. Where this has happened, the ripple effect of parent participation in school organizations, on local human service provider boards, and in strengthened resident councils has been profound.

What are the policy implications of these models? As the nation questions the future shape of service provision, the approaches profiled provide supportive and incentive-oriented alternatives. The organizations offer the following lessons:

1. Flexibility. Whatever their original entry point, family support programs often grow to meet the needs of other family members or devise collaborative arrangements to ensure that these groups are served. True family support recognizes that families in any community will change and that programs must respond accordingly. For example, several of the programs which had young child or adult entry points identified their interest in developing youth programs which incorporate family support principles.

2. Sensitivity to Diversity. With increasing diversity in public housing communities, new models of family support must address the challenges of multiculturalism. There are issues particular to families coming from other cultures and languages, as well as to U.S.-born residents, which must be addressed. As these dynamics frequently play out within the family or community setting, equipping all residents with the tools to function effectively in a multicultural society is critical. For example, Rainier Vista's cultural celebrations, women's groups, and Leadership Team all strengthen residents' capacities to build a more unified community. Strengthening the capacity of organizations to incorporate a multicultural perspective in their core approach should be a high priority.

3. Violence Prevention. The degree to which children and families are enmeshed in community violence demands that successful anti-violence strategies be part of an overall family support strategy. Since diminished self-esteem and negative

identity play a crucial role in generating violence,[5] family support strategies which focus on individual and collective empowerment for a range of age groups seem most promising.

4. Design Considerations. Physical conditions in the public housing environment have a pronounced effect on residents' lives. In some settings, the original family-unfriendly design schemes have been modified to provide interior and exterior space which more closely corresponds to the needs of families and children. Such modifications are important steps toward making public housing more amenable to family needs. For example, one essential element for any family support plan is indoor community space for holding gatherings and organizing a variety of programs.

5. Documentation and Evaluation. Systematic documentation and evaluation of model programs is needed to yield valuable information on patterns which emerge for each empowerment strategy, including, cost effectiveness and impact on systems' change. Access to technical assistance and financial support for this work should be seen as a priority.

6. Funding. The fragility of the groups with the smallest and least diversified funding is cause for concern. A reliable and multifaceted funding base is critical if more programs are to expand to other communities. While programs must be creative in utilizing local community resources, it is essential that HUD initiatives such as the Family Investment Centers and the Tenant Opportunities Program continue to provide resources to these programs. Seed funding from private national and local foundations also serves to encourage innovation in the field.

7. Building Networks. The programs profiled here have much to share with each other. Encouraging discussion and contact among those working in the field can only improve the potential for a stronger, more widespread movement of community-based family support programs in public housing developments.

SUMMARY

Despite the formidable challenges facing the groups described in this book, each one is making a significant contribution in their own community. Together with a growing number of other efforts in public housing developments across the country,[6] they provide new models of family-centered community support. The ability of the programs, and the individuals involved with them, to persevere in the face of extremely adverse conditions demonstrates a level of "staying power" which is frequently, and sadly, uncommon among programs based in low-income communities. Their capacity to promote individual *and* collective empowerment holds genuine promise for transforming public housing developments into centers of renewal. As Judith Minaker of the Rainier Vista Leadership Team observes:

> "It's about time that we take back ownership of our community and play a vital role in deciding what services we want and need." [7]

The challenge for those working in the field, policy makers, and funders, is to provide true infrastructure capacity and resources to family support initiatives in a broad-based and systematic fashion. With that, families living in public housing can begin to move beyond the safety net.

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ENDNOTES - INTRODUCTION

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9. *Walker v. HUD*, 3.

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19. Scott, E. (1985). *Managing the BHA: The Receivership Begins.* Kennedy School of Government Case Program, C16-85-627. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 11.

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ENDNOTES - FAMILY LEARNING CENTERS

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ENDNOTES - THE WELCOME PROJECT

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6. Wilson, P. "(Play) ground for celebration at Mystic," *Somerville Journal*, October 28, 1993.

7. From Welcome Project literature.

8. Lundergan, T. "Many are warming to Welcome Project," *Somerville Extra*, September 16, 1994.

ENDNOTES - THE RAINIER VISTA FAMILY CENTER

1. Unless otherwise noted, all information is from material provided by Paul Beals, Coordinator of the Rainier Vista Family Center; Brent Crook, Executive Director of Neighborhood House; and Judith Minaker and Kathy Brewer, Leadership Team members; during on-site interviews on March 21 and 22, 1994, respectively, and during subsequent correspondence and telephone interviews.

2. Seattle Housing Authority. (1992). *1992 Annual Population Report*. Seattle, WA: Author, 6-7, 10, 17, 19.

3. These population statistics are from correspondence with Paul Beals, Coordinator-Community Organizer for the Rainier Vista Family Center, dated May 25, 1994.

4. Seattle Housing Authority. (1991). *Seattle Family Support Center Demonstration Project Application for Family Support Center Funding*. Seattle, WA: Author, 2.

5. From on-site interview with Judith Minaker on March 12, 1994.

6. Rainier Vista Family Center. (1993). Monthly Report: October 1993. Seattle, WA: Author, 2.

7. For example, in early 1994 they conducted a survey to determine which color of painted siding residents preferred for a renovation project.

8. From on-site interview with Judith Minaker on March 21, 1994.

9. Rainier Vista Family Center. (1994). *Family Center Demonstration Project Goals and Principles*. Seattle, WA: Author, 1-2.

10. Telephone interview with Paul Beals on August 9, 1994.

11. Miller, J.Y. (1994). *Inside the Doors of Seattle's Family Centers: Principles, Programs and Participation in the Second Year, An Evaluation of Participant Use and Response*. Seattle, WA: City of Seattle, Department of Health and Human Services.

ENDNOTES - COMMUNITY BUILDING IN PARTNERSHIP, INC.

1. Unless otherwise noted, all information is from materials provided by Sarah Eilers, Program Director, The Enterprise Foundation; Jean Tucker Mann, Director of Services, Community Building in Partnership, Inc.; Thelma Millard, Director, Division of Family Support Services, Housing Authority of Baltimore City; Margaret Ruffin, President, Gilmor Homes Resident Council; and Laura Hayes, Consultant, in telephone interviews and correspondence during June - August, 1994.

2. Telephone interview with Margaret Ruffin, July 27, 1994.

3. Housing Authority of Baltimore City. (1992, June). *Semi-Annual Statistical Bulletin*. Baltimore City, MD: Author, 45.

4. Telephone interview with Patrick Costigan, August 19, 1994.

5. *Community Building in Partnership: Neighborhood Transformation Process, Sandtown-Winchester, Baltimore, Progress Report.* (1994, May). Baltimore, MD: Author, 4.

6. (1993, February 16). *Community Building in Partnership: A Proposal to Transform the Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood.* Baltimore, MD: Community Building in Partnership, Inc., 15.

7. (1993, August). *Proposal to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: Neighborhood Transformation Demonstration Program, Sandtown-Winchester, Baltimore.* Baltimore, MD: Community Building in Partnership, Inc., ii.

8. (1994, May). *Community Building in Partnership: Neighborhood Transformation Process, Sandtown-Winchester, Baltimore, Progress Report.* Baltimore, MD: CBP, Inc., 1.

9. (1993, August). *Proposal to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for Neighborhood Transformation Demonstration Program, Sandtown-Winchester, Baltimore.* Baltimore, MD: Community Building in Partnership, Inc., iii.

10. The collaborators include the Baltimore City Health Department, the University of Maryland Medical System and School of Nursing, Bon Secours Hospital, Liberty Medical Center and Total Health Care.

11. (1994, June). *Community Partnership Resolution Concerning Community Building in Partnership and Baltimore New Compact Schools for Sandtown-Winchester.* Baltimore, MD: Community Building in Partnership, Inc.

12. Telephone interview with Kathleen O'Toole, Lead Organizer for BUILD, on July 21, 1994.

13. (1993, February 16). *Community Building in Partnership: A Proposal to Transform the Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood.* Baltimore, MD: Community Building in Partnership, Inc., 32.4

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